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Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 1 May 2012

Mardi 1^{er} mai 2012

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller



Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 1 May 2012

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 1^{er} mai 2012

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

STRONG ACTION FOR ONTARIO ACT (BUDGET MEASURES), 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR UNE ACTION ÉNERGIQUE POUR L'ONTARIO (MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Mr. Duguid, on behalf of Mr. Duncan, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 55, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various Acts / Projet de loi 55, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter et à modifier diverses lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Debate?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, I'll be sharing my time with the members for Etobicoke Centre and Thunder Bay—Atikokan. I'm just checking behind me to make sure they're here, and they are.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very important bill, of course. It's the bill that follows the budget, a budget that indeed protects education and health care, while at the same time getting our deficit in balance by 2017-18. It's the single most important thing we can do to create jobs in Ontario, to build a strong economy and to attract investment to our province.

Our economy is responding well to our economic plan. We've seen thousands of jobs created in the last number of months—in fact, 46,000 last month alone. One of four jobs in Canada and the US is created here in Ontario, which is good news for our economy. We're confident with this budget, with the plan that we've put before the people of Ontario, that working together with all of our partners, we'll be able to ensure that we get the books balanced, keep Ontario's economy growing and become a global leader in this post-global-recession economy.

I don't want to speak any further. My colleagues have a lot to say on this, so I'm going to pass it over to them, and I thank you for the time.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further speakers?

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I'm pleased to stand today in the House for second reading of Bill 55, the Strong Action for Ontario Act, 2012.

The McGuinty government recognizes that serious action is required for a very serious time. That's why the Strong Action for Ontario Act, 2012, lays out a comprehensive five-year plan to keep Ontario on track to balance the budget by 2017-18. Let there be no mistake: When I say this bill is comprehensive, it's actually 355 pages in length. It has 69 different schedules. It's actually so comprehensive that it required special binding from the Queen's Printer.

The fiscal challenges of this bill are why it's so comprehensive, because today Ontario faces an enormous challenge. Before the recession, our government balanced three budgets in a row and eliminated the hidden deficit we inherited in 2003. We're committed to getting Ontario back to balance, and we're committed to continuing to build on our past successes. While we have a deficit because of the global recession, the stimulus our government injected into the economy during the recession to create and preserve jobs because of slow economic growth and global economic uncertainty was a necessary requirement. Governments of all political stripes have run deficits, significant deficits, to respond to the global recession. The federal government, for example, in growth in spending over the last few years, has been very similar to Ontario.

The single most important step that we can take to grow the economy, to protect our jobs and to help keep education and health strong is to balance the budget. Balancing the budget means keeping teachers in our classrooms and keeping doctors and nurses in our emergency rooms. Today, the cost to service the debt is approximately \$10 billion, our third-largest expenditure. In fact, we spend more on interest payments each year than we spend on colleges and universities. If we take no action, we will be spending almost as much to service the debt in 2017-18 as we spend today on education. So it's absolutely paramount that we move forward.

If strong action is not taken, the deficit will increase. That would hurt Ontario's ability to continue to focus on its priorities, and our priorities are health, education and smart investments to create jobs. If strong action is not taken, it would also mean unsuitable levels of debt. If strong action is not taken, Ontario's ability to set and to control its own priorities, its own choices and actions, will be impaired. Strong action is required to ensure that this government achieves its goal of eliminating the deficit by 2017-18, a goal we remain on track to achieve.

For the third year in a row, we have beaten our deficit forecasts. As a result of the proposed changes to the budget, Ontario's deficit in 2011-12 is now projected to be \$15 billion, which is a \$1.3-billion improvement from the deficit forecast in last year's budget, and an improvement of \$0.3 billion compared to the projection outlined in the 2012 budget.

In the medium term, the government is now projecting lower deficits than originally outlined in the 2012 budget, which did project those deficits of \$14.8 billion in 2012-13, \$12.8 billion in 2013-14, and \$10.1 billion in 2014-15. And last, but certainly not least, the government is now projecting a \$0.5-billion surplus in 2017-18.

I would like to add that the proposed changes to the 2012 budget include no new net spending. As a result, the province's expense outlook remains unchanged for the 2012 budget. Yet there is so much more to do. We choose to ensure that everyone in Ontario plays their part in returning the budget to balance. Shared sacrifice will ultimately mean shared prosperity for all Ontarians. That, of course, means leading by example. For those of us who are fortunate enough to serve in Ontario's Legislature, we are proposing to extend the pay freeze to MPPs by a further two years. That would make for a total of five years. We are also continuing to take action to manage compensation costs by extending the pay freeze for executives at our hospitals, colleges, universities, school boards and agencies for another two years, for a total of four years. We're asking Ontario businesses to do their part as well. For example, we are proposing a freeze on further reductions of the general corporate income tax rate and education rates for businesses, until the budget is balanced.

The actions of the McGuinty government over the past eight years have turned Ontario into one of the most competitive places for business to invest and create jobs. In total, we have reduced taxes for Ontario businesses by more than \$8 billion a year. Let me be clear: These measures would not increase tax rates for businesses.

0910

Further, we are proposing that Ontario user fees recover more of the cost of providing a service. The Auditor General has told us that when Ontario charges a fee for a service, the fee should recover the full cost of providing the service, and that we are proposing as well. We are proposing to make modest fee increases in some of these areas, some of which have not seen an increase for more than 15 years, and we will also find savings in many other areas.

We're proposing to cap the Ontario clean energy benefit at 3,000 kilowatt hours per month, which would allow almost all Ontario families to continue to receive the full 10% benefit on electricity, while creating more than \$500 million in savings over four years.

We will change the Ontario Drug Benefit program so that about 5% of senior Ontario Drug Benefit recipients—those with the highest incomes—pay more of their prescription drug costs, while ensuring that these costs do not impose an unreasonable burden. These changes will

not increase drug costs for seniors with incomes below \$100,000 for single seniors or \$160,000 for senior couples who already get the drug benefits.

We're also proposing to delay and/or cancel some infrastructure projects to reduce our borrowing by more than \$3 billion, but we will, however, focus infrastructure expenditures on the most critical areas, such as transportation networks, hospitals and post-secondary institutions, to maximize our return on investments. These are the best investments that will strengthen Ontario's economy for future growth and prosperity and support the government's priorities in health care and in education.

Madam Speaker, Ontarians want a strong and growing economy that creates well-paid jobs, yet the new global economic reality presents its challenges to Ontario. Increased competition from emerging economies has resulted in Ontario losing some of its share in its key export market, particularly the United States. Higher oil prices have driven up the costs of doing business in Ontario, and at the same time, the rise in oil prices has led to a higher Canadian dollar, which further diminishes the competitiveness of Ontario's businesses in a global market.

Given these challenges, Ontario's continued prosperity will—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Excuse me a moment. I'd ask those who are carrying on side conversations to take them outside. It's difficult to hear the speaker. Thank you.

Please continue.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's nice to have an attentive audience. I appreciate that.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Yes, and I'm listening to every word.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: Thank you.

Let me repeat, then: Given these challenges, Ontario's continued prosperity will be strongly linked to its ability to achieve higher rates of productivity growth. Currently, the government delivers about \$2 billion in business supports, including targeted business tax expenditures through more than 40 programs across at least seven ministries. Many of these programs will be consolidated into the jobs and prosperity fund.

To help build a strong and diversified Ontario that enables businesses to invest in innovation, improve productivity and become more globally competitive, we are proposing the following measures: consolidating those many business support programs into a jobs and prosperity fund, which will focus on productivity growth and job creation while creating an overall savings of \$250 million by 2014-15.

Also by 2014-15, the government will have created an unprecedented fund of up to \$1.2 billion for businesses. The businesses will also require a highly skilled workforce, and the government expects to expend approximately \$1.3 billion on employment and training pro-

grams in 2014-15. Together, these two funds represent an investment of \$2.5 billion in jobs and the economy.

Establishing a multi-stakeholder jobs and prosperity council to advise the government on a plan to boost Ontario's productivity is one of our priorities. It will lead a research agenda on Ontario's productivity and innovative challenges.

We will also diversify Ontario's exports to emerging economies by streamlining and coordinating the trade promotion activities of all relevant ministries.

The jobs and prosperity fund will transform the way the government currently delivers supports to businesses. It will also encourage Ontario businesses to be more productive and innovative, creating long-term prosperity and sustainability. It will target at least 25% in administrative savings and the winding down of non-productivity-focused programs.

The government recognizes that regional economies have distinct requirements. As a result, the following funds will be maintained—of course, at the pleasure of the Legislature, as it is now before the House: the proposed new southwestern Ontario development fund, the eastern Ontario development fund and the program administered by the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp. in the north.

Keeping the regional funds outside of the jobs and prosperity fund will make it possible to address specific regional needs. For example, northern Ontario's economic development needs are quite different from those in the GTA or eastern Ontario. These funds will benefit from the productivity focus and innovative approach to program design developed for the jobs and prosperity fund. It's very important to recognize the diversity in our province and that the regions are unique unto themselves. We must be able to adapt their needs to what our needs are, so that we can provide the support for them.

Together, Madam Speaker, these actions will help Ontario companies make more efficient and innovative use of labour, capital, energy and raw materials to produce those goods and services that we need. Higher productivity growth leads to higher wages and helps businesses expand globally, resulting in the creation of new jobs and an improved standard of living for all Ontarians.

The McGuinty government has been and remains committed to increasing access to quality care for all Ontarians. In fact, between 2003-04 and 2011-12, health sector funding increased at an average rate of 6.1% annually, for a total increase of \$17.9 billion. These investments reflect the government's commitment to increased quality care for all Ontarians. As a result of the current fiscal challenge, funding for the health care system cannot continue to grow at these rates. Transforming Ontario's health care system is essential to managing down the rate of health care spending growth to meet the government's commitment to balance the budget.

Madam Speaker, the strategies in this budget will help maintain excellent health care for Ontarians while slow-

ing overall growth in health spending in Ontario to an average of 2.1% annually over the next three years. We will maintain total physician compensation at current levels through the next physician services agreement with the Ontario Medical Association, and at the same time improve patient access to primary care providers, rather than going directly to hospital emergency rooms, by expanding same-day and next-day appointments and after-hours care.

These investments have improved health care in Ontario, after years of neglect, and produced meaningful improvements for families. But with the current fiscal challenge, we recognize that funding for the health care system, as I said, cannot continue to grow at past rates. Additionally, health care drivers, such as demographic factors, demands for service and technology changes continue to exert pressure on the fiscal plan. The delivery of health care has to be transformed to continue providing the high-quality health care services that Ontarians need and respect. That is why the McGuinty government is working with its health care partners to bring about a transformation to a more sustainable and higher-quality health care system. We are focusing on better value for money and creating a system that delivers health care in a smarter and more efficient way that will lead to better outcomes for Ontarians.

The McGuinty government plan is based on three key strategies to realize better value for money: shifting investments to where they have the greatest value and health care benefit; preventing illness and helping Ontarians stay healthy and active by focusing on health promotion, including reducing childhood obesity and smoking rates; and providing better access to primary care, home care and community care, so patients can receive the care that they need where they need it and when they need it.

These strategies and the additional actions announced in the 2012 budget will help maintain excellent health care for Ontarians while slowing the overall growth in health spending.

0920

Transforming Ontario's health care system is essential to managing, as I said, the rate of health care spending growth to meet the government's commitment to balance the budget. The health care system is being transformed through these strategies under way, but also including drug reform, Excellent Care for All legislation and primary care reform.

With these actions and more, our government's plan includes \$17.7 billion worth of spending over three years of savings and actions to contain cost increases compared to what it would have been otherwise.

The deficit for 2011-12 is projected to be \$15 billion; \$1.3 billion lower than forecasted in the 2011 budget. Without the measures we are proposing, Ontario's deficit would approach \$25 billion in 2014-15, but now it is expected and projected to be \$10.1 billion that fiscal year.

Our government will continue to focus on its priorities to further strengthen the economy and to also spur job creation. We've made some very difficult choices, but they are the right choices. We choose to protect and we choose to build on Ontario's achievements while returning to balance by 2017-18. We choose to transform the public and broader public service sectors and, in doing so, how they serve Ontarians. We choose to reshape public services to ensure that everything that is done is done more effectively and more efficiently.

In conclusion, the McGuinty government will continue to make the right choices and to build on its plan to have the world's best-educated workforce to ensure future prosperity in the knowledge-based economy. We will do so by making the right choices, as I said, and by choosing to fully implement, for example, full-day kindergarten by September 2014; by choosing to keep a cap on class sizes in the early grades; by choosing to remain committed to the 30%-off Ontario tuition grant for eligible full-time undergraduate university and college students; and by choosing to integrate training programs across government to make them more responsive to today's job market.

Ontario offers a range of employment and training supports through dozens of programs across 11 ministries, each targeting different client groups and using a variety of different delivery systems and networks. Integrating these supports into a single network with a single customer window will allow the government to improve client outcomes and to also better meet the needs of employers, thereby supporting a key government objective of increasing jobs and growth. Better coordination would also improve both the efficiency and effectiveness of programs, therefore enhancing the value of government investments.

Despite the challenging fiscal situation, the government is continuing to boost its support also for post-secondary education, as I indicated. That's to support that knowledge-based economy that we know we need. The government's investments have resulted in significant achievements in this sector, including Ontario's post-secondary attainment rate being the highest in any OECD country. The budget reaffirms the continuation of the new 30%-off Ontario tuition grant which was introduced in January 2012 to help low- and middle-class families access post-secondary education. More than 300,000 students, Madam Speaker, are eligible for this new grant.

Most importantly, we are choosing to continue with our plan to balance this budget. Yet, with the return to balanced budgets as a key fiscal objective, it is not in itself an end—it's a means to an end: ensuring that Ontario families will continue to receive the greatest value through the best education and health care system in the world and a strong economy that creates jobs. In fact, even before the budget achieves balance, the measures we're proposing will help to support the province in improving fiscal health and sustainability, which will provide that strong foundation for the longer-term sus-

tainability of core services, such as education and health care.

The Strong Action for Ontario Act (Budget Measures), 2012, is a series of smart choices to ensure a strong economy while protecting the gains we have made together in our education, health care and public service. That's why I'm asking for support in the House in passing this act.

I also would like to share with you that the demographics in my community are an aging demographic. One of the things that I've learned over the 24 years that I've been involved in politics in this particular riding is that they say to me, "You get our money through taxes. What we ask you to do is spend it wisely and spend it well, ensuring that we protect both the young—our children—through education, and also our health, as we're an aging population."

It's very difficult for someone to think in billions of dollars, so when you talk about a \$25-billion deficit or a \$15-billion deficit, it's not where the rubber hits the road for them. Where the rubber hits the road is in their community and involved with them on a day-to-day basis. Are we ensuring that the children are well educated, to be able to provide for the seniors as they get older? Are we ensuring that we have good, sound fiscal management of the dollars that they give us? Are we ensuring that in fact there is health care for them when it's needed, and that, as I said, in an aging society, we're dealing with those diseases, such as with the bill I introduced on Alzheimer's and dementia?

Those are the conversations that take place. They entrust us in this House to do the very best we can to ensure that their future is based on a solid foundation. This budget bill provides for that foundation. As I said earlier, it's not the only thing; it's the beginning of the things we're able to do. But I also think it's incumbent upon all of us working together in this House to find the most effective way to move forward, on behalf of the people we serve, so that they know and have a comfort level that their future is secure.

The crisis we all went through was the greatest since the recession back in the 1930s. It hit virtually every country in the world. We're not immune to that, and we have to deal with it. That does mean making some very difficult choices, but they're based on a solid priority of the things we need to ensure for that foundation to be continued to be built, so that in the future we can all share in the prosperity that comes as a result of it.

I think it's particularly important for all of us to work together to ensure that as we move forward, we remember who we're moving forward on behalf of, and that's the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Speaker, thank you very much. I'm pleased this morning to have an opportunity to provide some remarks on the budget bill today and follow up on the remarks from the member from Etobicoke Centre. I want to thank her for her time this morning as well.

It is Tuesday, May 1, today: relevant, I think, because we find ourselves fully one week since the budget motion vote last week. I think it's important to note that the tone and the tenor of the place here this week, at least for me, seems to be a little quieter, a little softer and, I think it's fair to say, perhaps lacking some of the drama that was dripping down the walls here last week. But that's the nature of it when you are in a minority Parliament.

I think all of us on this side of the House want to thank the NDP for their support of our Liberal budget last week. We very much appreciated that. We think it was the right choice by the NDP to support our budget. I don't think that there are many, if any, people in the province—certainly there are probably a few, but I don't think very many—who would have felt it was appropriate for the Conservatives and the NDP to vote jointly and defeat the budget and send the electorate of Ontario into an election a short six months since the last one. So I want to thank them for the support.

I think there are people in my riding of Thunder Bay—Atikokan who are a little unsure, to be fair, as to the strategy entertained by the official opposition, the members of the Conservatives, in terms of their approach to appearing unwilling to consult, given that it is a minority Parliament, with our Liberal government in terms of what amendments were possible to bring to the table to get them onside. But they took the approach—and many say they hadn't even read the budget, and it certainly was a quick announcement, I would say, so you'd have to believe there was not a lot of time, if any, spent going through the document before the decision was made by the Conservative caucus that they would not be voting for the budget. Such was the approach, and we all live with that. But again, I'll thank the NDP for their support in us getting this particular budget through.

We'll probably find ourselves, quite possibly, in a similar situation in six months or a year from now, which would only put us one year or a year and a half out from the October 6, 2011, election. I would suggest to people that the conversation will be very much the same. I'm not sure that people will be interested in an election one year from now or six months from now—putting us one year since the election—than they were just last week, but that is yet to be told.

0930

I find the minority situation very interesting. I must say, there is a part of me that likes it. Obviously, we'd love the majority, but it's interesting to watch the gymnastics that now need to go on on the opposition benches. Of course, when you have a majority, the opposition parties, Conservative or NDP, as it has been for the last two terms, can simply criticize with no consequence. They can, as is their role, hold the feet of the government to the fire. That's their job, and we respect that and we understand that. I would suggest, though, that it is much easier for them to do that when the government is in a majority position because, quite clearly and quite honestly, there is no consequence for the way they vote.

In a minority situation, of course, it's different. There is a very significant consequence, because if the Conservatives and the NDP choose to vote together, then the government falls on a confidence vote and we would find ourselves in an election. That didn't happen last week on the budget motion, which was a confidence vote. As I have said, they did not vote together, so the government still stands and we continue to do our work. But I think it is quite interesting, Speaker, that in a minority situation, there are suddenly consequences for the way you vote.

I would offer, before I move on to my remarks more specifically on the budget, two examples. We have seen in the Legislative Assembly, in the course of the last month or so, two private members' bills introduced here in the chamber, both by Conservative members. What we found was that the NDP voted against the Conservatives and voted with the Liberals on items that—before those private members' bills were introduced, the NDP would roundly and soundly criticize our Liberal government for those pieces of legislation.

The first one—and this is relevant to me, Speaker, as a northern member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan—was the Far North Act. We heard at length, over the last three years or so, criticism from the NDP caucus on the Far North Act. It was interesting to listen to the criticism, because I think, as a caucus, they were very conflicted on it. Truth be known, I firmly believe they are very supportive of it. In the past, however, they were able to criticize because there was no consequence. There was no impact in terms of voting against us on the Far North Act because they knew that we had a majority and in all likelihood the bill would pass. And of course, that's what transpired. But it was always my belief that the NDP caucus was very supportive of the Far North Act. In fact, when the private member's bill was introduced by a member of the Conservative official opposition, it was no surprise to me that the NDP voted with the Liberals to maintain the Far North Act and to not repeal that piece of legislation. I think it's important to note that, Speaker, because when you want some power, when you want some juice around this place and then you get it, all of a sudden there are consequences.

The other one I would mention is the Green Energy Act. There was a private member's bill introduced by a Conservative member. I think the intent of that was to repeal, as well, although I can't recall for sure the detail of the Green Energy Act private member's bill. Again, the NDP members voted in concert with the Liberals to maintain the Green Energy Act.

I just mention that in the context of the minority Parliament that we found ourselves in last week. The ground has now shifted a little bit, obviously, since the resignation of the member from Kitchener—Waterloo. Things are slightly different but still in a state of flux, I would suggest.

Speaker, the budget—I would like to just give a little bit of how we found ourselves here today. When we were elected in 2003, we listed, I think quite rightly, three different deficits that we felt we had inherited from the

previous administration: an infrastructure deficit, a services deficit and a financial deficit. People will remember that when we arrived in 2003, we had a \$5.5-billion deficit. Interestingly enough, it was actually hidden going into the election. Many will remember that there was a denial that there was any deficit at all. Of course, it was later confirmed by the Auditor General and led us to invoke new legislation that will not allow that to happen again. It will require the Auditor General to review the books and the state of the finances in the province of Ontario and give a snapshot of those six months or so before any election, so that we will never again see that situation reoccur.

But we inherited a \$5.5-billion deficit in 2003. We took, I think, two years to retire that deficit and bring us back into a balanced position, which took us to about 2005. Then we ran three consecutive balanced budgets. Speaker, that took us to 2007-08. Of course, we all know what occurred in 2008: the greatest recession since the Great Depression. Thirty million to 40 million jobs worldwide were lost. I think it's important to mention that. Sometimes here, and certainly in my riding of Thunder Bay—Atikokan, where the forestry situation was obvious to all of us, in terms of how it was directly affected by the global recession—but it was global. I think it's important to remember that: 30 million to 40 million people, give or take, lost their jobs in 2008-09.

Ontario, of course, was affected on a scale, I would say, relative to most jurisdictions in Canada. At that time, Ontario represented about 40% of the economy, and a big chunk of that total of 100% of our economy was related to the manufacturing sector. Of course, the manufacturing sector was more impacted, I would say, by the recession than other sectors, for a variety of reasons, one being that the manufacturing sector exports most of its products into the United States. With the rise in the Canadian dollar and with the recession and the collapse of the American economy, obviously the markets for those products were disappearing, and they were disappearing very quickly. So here in Ontario we had a very significant challenge—I would say perhaps more impactful here in Ontario than some other jurisdictions—given the largesse of our economy that was dedicated to the manufacturing sector.

In my neck of the woods in northern Ontario, the forestry sector was very much affected, as I've mentioned already. All forestry jurisdictions, however, in Canada, the major ones—and there are primarily three, those being BC, Quebec and Ontario—were affected almost in similar numbers. In fact, BC and Quebec lost jobs slightly higher than Ontario did in forestry, anywhere from 10,000 to 12,000 jobs, but the decimation of the industry was huge. It was not cyclical, as has been the past history; it was fundamental. We all know we've seen a shift in demand for products like newsprint. It's just not the same as it used to be, with the electronic age. We're not sure if that particular product will ever see the days or the demand that it had in the past.

Nevertheless, the industry has survived, and on the sawmilling side I would suggest that the collapse of the housing industry in the United States was the single biggest factor, as well as the appreciation of the Canadian dollar. The sawmills up in my neck of the woods, 90% to 95% of their product was exported into the American market—90% to 95%. That market simply collapsed. There's a really interesting statistic—and we all have too many statistics in our head—that there are more houses for sale in the United States still today than there are houses existing in all of Canada. We all remember the subprime mortgage crisis, the collapse of the economy in the US. Obviously these factors directly impact the ability of a sawmill to have somebody who would buy their product. That's a bit of the history. That's a bit of how we got here. Of course, through 2008 and 2009 we began to invest heavily, especially through our infrastructure programs.

This is an austerity budget. The member who spoke before me mentioned, and I think it bears repeating, that as members of the Legislature we have tried to lead by example. I don't know how many people are aware, but we had, as MPPs, frozen our wages for three years, going back three years from today, and we have extended that freeze for a further two years. By the time that wraps up, it will mean that the MPPs in the province of Ontario—and I've never heard one person complain about that; I think that's a good sign. By the time this concludes, it will have been five years that the MPPs in the province of Ontario have taken a wage freeze. I think it's something we should mention.

I would mention as well, Speaker, that one of the biggest misconceptions in Ontario—and I think all members can relate to this—is that MPPs in Ontario don't have a pension plan. People seem to think we do, and that's neither here nor there. But given the context that we're in, I would just mention it. We always get mixed up; the feds have it, of course, I think after six years. Is it after six years that—

0940

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: After six years.

Mr. Bill Mauro: You become eligible immediately after six years if you're a federal member. In Ontario, we do not have a pension plan. But that's just a small point.

Speaker, what I would like to talk a bit about today as well is this is an austerity budget. I think it's important to highlight some of what we have protected.

Since 2003, health care and education have remained the two main priorities of our government, and I think if you polled Ontarians just at any point in time, health care and education would either be in the top two only, or you might see them in the top three from time to time. Obviously, the economy finds its way into that mix, but health care and education are always two of the highest priorities of most people in the province.

I want to just run down a few numbers. I won't give too many numbers, but it really is remarkable. People wonder, "Where does your money go? What do you spend your money on?" These are big numbers. Here's

an example of where they go. I think some of these numbers are very relevant, given that we are in negotiations with the education sector and we are in negotiations with the Ontario Medical Association. These are difficult times. I think some of these numbers will put a little bit of context on where we've come from and where we're trying to go in the future.

In health care today, there are 3,400 more doctors working in Ontario than when we came to government in 2003. That's a lot of money; that's a big investment. There are over 12,000 more nurses working today than there were in 2003, when we came to government. Some 2.1 million more people in Ontario have access to a primary care provider than was the case when we came to government in 2003. I want to speak just a bit about that one. For me, as a northern member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan, that's important, and I want to underscore that point. Northern communities like mine, rural communities, not just in Ontario but all across Canada, have chronically had an issue and a challenge maintaining a large enough complement of primary care providers in their communities. This is a decades-long challenge; this is not something that occurred just when we arrived in government in 2003. In my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan, there were high numbers of what were described as orphan patients, those being people who did not have access to a primary care provider.

In 2003, when you used the words “primary care provider,” that meant simply a physician. Some 2.1 million people today have access to a primary care provider that they did not in 2003. This is a huge move forward. In my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan, while there are still people who do not have that access, there are thousands and thousands more who do. We've accomplished that in a few ways. The creation of nurse-practitioner-led clinics, a new model of care: We've revamped and expanded the scope of practice for nurse practitioners, and that model of care is providing access to a primary care provider for thousands of those orphan patients. About two blocks away from my constituency office in Thunder Bay, there exists a nurse practitioner clinic that has 3,200 people rostered at that particular clinic—3,200 people who, before that clinic opened, did not have access to a primary care provider.

Our family health team model: I have two or three of them in my riding alone. My colleague from Thunder Bay–Superior North has two or three in his, as well as a nurse practitioner clinic. The combination of that model with the NP clinics, with the addition of all of these additional doctors, has made a huge impact in terms of making sure we have access to primary care. And the physicians, I would say, and the health care professionals, love the family health team model.

Some 2.1 million people, 3,400 doctors, 12,000 nurses: That's a lot of money. People wonder where your money goes. Well, that's where it's going, a lot of it, and that's because we see, as a government, health care is certainly our number one priority.

A couple of small things in my riding, specific to my riding, of investments in health care: an angioplasty program in Thunder Bay that is seeing thousands of people now get that life-saving procedure done locally and not having to fly to southern Ontario; and a small piece that I'm very proud of is vans that we have funded to the NorWest Community Health Centre and the staffing that goes with those vans, allowing them to distribute and provide care and access in my rural communities like out in Shebandowan or Kakabeka, where the van actually now will make a monthly or bimonthly visit, out into the rural areas 30, 60, 80 miles away. Many of those people would not have been able to or found the capacity to come into the city of Thunder Bay for that care—just small examples, those ones being smaller examples, of investments in health care that are providing better care for people.

On the education side, Speaker, I mentioned how we've maintained our investments in the education sector through this budget—13,700 more support staff working in our schools. Anywhere from 8,500 to 10,000, and I'm not sure about this number; some people tell me it's even higher—but up to 10,000 more teachers working in the province of Ontario today than was the case when we came to government in 2003. This is a huge investment in education; and 200,000 more post-secondary spaces in our colleges and universities today than there was in 2003. I'm told that each of those spaces has a cost of about \$10,000. You wonder where your money is going? In Thunder Bay, a new law school will be coming.

I want to go back to those teaching positions, though, and make one point, again, understanding that there are some sensitivities around this issue as the negotiations are going on with our education partners. Out of the 10,000 new teaching positions, I would suggest that many of those are very young, newly graduated teachers. They are people who've probably only been teaching for three to five years. Many of them are probably 24, 26 or 30 years of age. I would suggest that they are the people who are represented in this 10,000 number. Where do they come from? Well, they came primarily from two places: one, our commitment to smaller class sizes. It is important to note that the Drummond report recommended that we eliminate the cap; we maintained the cap, which exhibits our continuing commitment to education. We maintained the cap, which maintains those teaching positions, and we maintained, as well, full-day kindergarten and the commitment to roll it out and fully implement it across the province of Ontario.

I would say to the younger teachers and to their parents, aunts, uncles and neighbours: Those younger teachers, many of them in that 10,000 number, are working today because of our commitment to education more broadly, but more specifically our commitment to smaller class sizes and to full-day kindergarten. I would say that it was interesting to note that some of the criticisms of the budget that were coming from members of the official opposition were around full-day kindergarten. I say it was interesting because, only six months earlier, in

the election of 2011, the Conservatives were very much committed, apparently, to maintaining and rolling out full-day kindergarten, and then just six months later, suddenly that commitment had vanished, the context being that in the election of 2011, their commitment was the same as ours in terms of the timeline to achieve a balanced budget position in the province of Ontario, that being 2017-18. So I'm not sure how that flows.

The last two pieces on our commitment to education that I would mention—30% off the tuition grant. Some 30,000 post-secondary students will be eligible for this. We just had a little announcement yesterday reminding those graduating from high school who are going directly into a college or university to ensure they're aware of this program and make sure they do what's necessary to make themselves eligible and receive this grant.

The second piece in education is something that I think is easy to forget about: our Second Career program that we brought forward after the recession hit. Some 55,000 people have accessed that particular program. I can think of a number of circumstances where I've been in the company of people who were laid-off workers, some of them who had not been in school for 20 or 30 years and who, through the capacity that was created with the Second Career program, were able to financially find their way back into school and come out of it on the other end with a job. Many of them in my neck of the woods of Thunder Bay–Atikokan are finding themselves working, making good money in the mining sector, which is really getting ready to roll. In fact, I would suggest that it already has begun to really roll.

A few things that I would mention as well—an austerity budget that we have managed to maintain, specific to northern Ontario.

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Right now, in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan, I would say the lowest or one of the lowest unemployment rates in the province—5.2%, the last number announced. Our number has consistently been one of the lowest for the last three years. I have felt it. I've known it. I've been a little bit reluctant to talk about it because as a politician, you don't want to sound too Pollyannaish—people dismiss you sometimes. But people in the community are now starting to feel that they're getting it on their own—5.2%.

The northern Ontario heritage fund: When we came in 2003, I was tasked at that time by the minister of the day to travel across the province. We revamped that entire program; we made it more focused on private sector job creation. We've taken the fund from \$60 million up to \$100 million. That started in 2007. That represents an additional \$100 million, not total dollars, from 2007 to 2011 that we invested in northern Ontario through that one program—100 million additional dollars by going from \$60 million to \$100 million. That's on top of the \$240 million—\$60 million per year times four years—plus an extra \$100 million just through one program. That's \$340 million invested in northern Ontario, through the northern Ontario heritage fund—a commitment that

we made as a Liberal government to the needs of northern Ontario. I thank all members of our northern caucus, who worked very hard to ask for and get those—not only maintaining the northern Ontario heritage fund, but increasing it, as I've said, from \$60 million to \$100 million through recessionary times. It would have been very easy to take that money and stick it into the general revenue fund like occurred under the third party in the early 1990s.

Also, we have seen record investments through our Northern Highways Program over the course of the last number of years. Up to 2003, when we formed government, the single highest year of financial investment in northern highways was about \$230 million or \$250 million. That was the single highest year. In 2009 or 2010, our Northern Highways Program topped out at about \$770 million. Last year, I believe we were somewhere in the \$680-million range. That's northern highways money only. The people in the ridings of Thunder Bay–Atikokan and Thunder Bay–Superior North are very clear that they are seeing at least one project move forward that they've been asking for for about 30 years, and that's the four-laning of the Trans-Canada Highway between Thunder Bay and Nipigon, made possible by these huge investments in our Northern Highways Program.

I was up at NOMA in Kenora last week, and I've since met and talked with a few people who have driven back from Kenora to Thunder Bay, and they remarked to me how surprised they were to see how many additional passing lanes there were and the condition of the highway that exists between Kenora and Thunder Bay. That speaks very directly and tangibly to the investments that we've been making in northern highways in Ontario since we came to government in 2003.

One of the other pieces that we protected in this budget was what I refer to as the NIER program, the Northern Industrial Electricity Rate program. That is providing huge subsidies for our largest energy users in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan. Resolute Forest Products, formerly AbitibiBowater, is receiving this particular program. As a northern Liberal caucus, we fought very hard for this particular program. This budget maintained the program. Again, it's another example of a program that the Drummond report recommended should be removed. He did not think it was a good idea.

The Ontario clean energy benefit—another example of a recommendation by Mr. Drummond that it should be removed. Our northern Liberal caucus worked very hard to get that. That's the 10% reduction off your energy bills on a monthly basis, right off the bottom line—again, maintained in this budget during difficult times, a commitment to northern Ontario.

As I mentioned just a second ago, last week I was in Kenora. I flew up on Friday. NOMA, the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association, held their conference. It was a pleasure to be there. I hadn't been to Kenora for a little while. We had three ministers there, as well as myself representing the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. It was a great day.

One of the things I want to talk about that is top of mind not only for those municipal reps, but all people in northern Ontario, certainly in my neck of the woods, is mining, and a bit more specifically, the Ring of Fire. We have come in for some criticism insofar as people are not seeing a public display or a public acknowledgement, at least not to their satisfaction, of the work that's going on related to the Ring of Fire.

I've mentioned a number of times in the media, when I've spoken to the media about this, a concern that there wasn't enough in the budget about it. I tell them, quite frankly, "Look, the budget is not the place where you are going to see details relative to negotiations that are going on with any company about any specific project." I think it's as simple as that. However, there is a great deal of anxiety and excitement about the potential for what exists, not only in the Ring of Fire area but in mining generally.

Now, you would have seen, and I reminded my friends at NOMA, that our budget spoke to a belief that we will see anywhere from eight to 10 new mines opened in northern Ontario over the course of the next 10 years, and when I had the opportunity to talk at NOMA, I referenced at least four of those. Of course, in the mining industry, nothing is ever guaranteed; I'm not standing here today saying for certain these mines are going to open. But all signs point very clearly to a strong possibility that this is going to happen. The people in northern Ontario are very aware of those.

The other point I made to people when it came to the mining sector is that there is a bit of an unfortunate assumption that the employment only comes when the mine opens, but I can tell you, Speaker, in my riding right now of Thunder Bay—Atikokan—I would say all of Thunder Bay and northern Ontario—there's probably right now in our city anywhere from 300, 500, 700 more jobs today that weren't there three and four years ago, related directly to the mining industry—that weren't there three or four years ago—and that's without any new mines having opened in the last three or four years, the point being that there's a tremendous amount of work going on.

If you go to our engineering firms in Thunder Bay, they are bursting at the seams, and a lot of the work that they're doing is related to the mining industry. If you talk to consultants, you will see there's a lot of consulting work going on related to the mining industry. There are drilling companies that I've had the pleasure of meeting that have 50, 60, 70 people working for them, and these young people who are working on these drills are making a lot of money. They're making a very good living. They're adding to the total—the geologists, the prospectors. It's all there, and so it is a very good thing indeed.

I'll tell you, Speaker, one of the things that does come up from time to time specifically related to the Ring of Fire is a policy piece that was in the NDP platform in the last election. It raised the ire of a couple of them when I spoke to this last week, but it was there, and I'm looking for some clarity from them on this particular piece. In

there, on a website of their environmental critic, there was a point that said there would be no development north of 51, which would effectively shut down the Ring of Fire or any development north of 51.

When my colleague from Thunder Bay—Superior North put out a press release related to that issue during the last election, for the first time in two or three years, within two or three days, that particular piece was removed from the website. So this comes up. People in northern Ontario are aware of that particular policy piece that at least existed then with the NDP, and they are very concerned about the official position of that today. I think it's fair to ask for some clarification on it.

The other thing that I mentioned to the people at NOMA when we were talking specifically about the Ring of Fire—much of the conversation is about the cost of electricity in the province of Ontario. I've reminded them and used as an example what I spoke to earlier, the NIER program, the Northern Industrial Electricity Rate program. That's still there. It speaks very clearly to our willingness to work with our large industrial partners to make sure that the work happens in Ontario, that the business investment comes to Ontario.

But I spoke to them further, and I said, "Please don't view the Ring of Fire development only in the context of one policy piece." I talked to them. Remember as well that when a company like Cliffs or other large industrial companies, whoever they may be, are looking about potential investment in the province of Ontario, they don't just think about one thing. They're also thinking about our corporate taxation rates. I remind people about our province, in Ontario, given what we have done over the course of the last three or four years bringing forward a very competitive corporate tax structure. Large industrials think about that.

I reminded them about the HST, which came in with some great difficulty, which the Conservatives used to support, but then they didn't, and the NDP, in their platform, confirmed they would keep. I reminded people that in the mining sector, people like Cliffs are aware of the HST and they view corporate taxation, the HST policy, as pieces that also infuse their decision in terms of where they're going to invest.

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The third piece that I talked about with them when I talked about the Ring of Fire, and mining specifically, is infrastructure. I said right off the top, at the very beginning of my comments, that when we came into government in 2003, we talked at length about three deficits that we were facing, the infrastructure deficit being one of them. I don't think there's a member in this place who hasn't seen large infrastructure investments flow to their municipalities since 2003, and that's because, after identifying infrastructure as a deficit in Ontario in 2003, we went forward and, over the course of seven, maybe eight years, we invested \$60 billion in infrastructure in the province of Ontario. That money went a long way to significant job creation in all of the ridings represented here in this Legislative Assembly and, I would say, made

many communities more ready to attract investment than previously was the case.

What did we do in 2011? We further built upon those investments by confirming a further commitment to infrastructure, going forward for three years, of \$30 billion or \$31 billion—I forget the number exactly—that we are further committing, that we will invest in infrastructure over the course of the next three years.

Now, again, given that this is an austerity budget, the \$30 billion or \$31 billion over the next three years is committed, maintained and conserved in this particular budget. I'm tying that back, of course, to what I'm discussing here, being the Ring of Fire. When Cliffs and others communities are looking at where they're going to invest, they know very clearly that this is a government that is willing to come to the table with help on the infrastructure front.

When we talk about the Ring of Fire specifically, I remind my friends about our energy policies. I remind my friends about our corporate taxation policies. I remind my friends about the HST policy that large industrials find very attractive. I also remind them very much about our infrastructure investments over the last eight years and those investments that will still be coming forward over the course of the next three years, guaranteed, conserved in this budget.

Speaker, I see that my time is up. I want to thank you for your time this morning. I appreciate the opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I listened carefully to the one hour on this, shared by the Minister of Economic Development and the members from Etobicoke Centre and Thunder Bay—Atikokan.

It's important to note that the minister hasn't actually responded to this, but this is the document here, a pretty onerous document here—it's 327 pages. The devil usually is in the detail. Look, there are 69 different schedules here. All of the schedules provide a framework structure for creating more regulations and red tape. If you look at the language, it's important to note that much of the language in the bill itself was not discussed by the members, who were talking about how they see the world.

Almost every section in each schedule starts with the provision "The minister may make regulations that apply" in specific cases, so there's a lot of power that's not actually in the bill; it's in the regulations. That's what happens when you have these omnibus bills that are putting in place things—and if you really want some detail here, look at schedule 19. I've had complaints on that from my riding. These are people that specifically work in that sector. Schedule 19 deals with the Endangered Species Act, and it gives exemptions. That whole section is donated to giving Dalton McGuinty exemptions in dealing with endangered species. So the devil is in the detail, for sure.

Somebody that's listening this morning would have gotten a lot of the prepared notes that were prepared for the three speakers—who read the notes very well, I might

say; hardly a slip in the wording—sticking on the message of Dalton McGuinty that everything is okay; don't worry, be happy. In fact, everything is quite the opposite to what he says. It's almost like a contradiction. We are in serious trouble. This thing here is another kind of an open book on a new set of rules for the economy of Ontario. Just read it. There are 69 different schedules.

In fact, in my terse review of the thing—because I like to spend some detail—it amends 50 pieces of legislation. In other words, you can't read this without having 50 statutes beside you that are being amended. This is a shell game, and I think it's—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I was actually quite interested in the discussion from the government side about their austerity program. Actually, it's almost laughable. We have Ornge and eHealth. If we did a forensic audit of every ministry in the government, we wouldn't need an austerity program, with all the money they've wasted on consultants and all these scams that have gone on.

Then the member from Thunder Bay talks about how great it is up there. Why would you be closing a railway or attacking a railway that services the north, will service the Ring of Fire, will bring raw materials out of the Ring of Fire? Are they going to put them on a plane? I don't think so.

Let's talk about hydro. The member is well aware that the hydro costs in the north are three times that of Manitoba and three times that of Quebec.

They also attacked the forest industry. There are 11 communities that have shut down. He said he visited Kenora. I wonder if he went to the paper mills that used to be in Kenora until this government devastated it with their hydro costs. People in Kenora are sitting on their front porch watching logs roll by to be processed in Manitoba.

When he says everything's great and this government does a great program, it is almost laughable, because it isn't. It's a disaster in the waiting, and it's going to continue until they start lowering hydro costs, they stop attacking transportation in the north and they start putting people back to work.

He said something about the NDP, a little clause or something he'd read; he'd dug real deep and found something that was negative about the NDP going after the Ring of Fire. We are well aware that the Ring of Fire will provide jobs for northerners. We're 100% behind that.

So when I have to sit here and listen to this "deflect, deflect" nonsense, it really is irritating, because they're not being honest with the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I did listen very carefully to the introductory remarks of the Minister of Economic Development and Innovation and the members for Etobicoke Centre and Thunder Bay—Atikokan.

I always take the time, sometimes, above the partisan debate. I follow Mark Carney, the Governor of the Bank of Canada, very closely. He is beyond politics—a highly respected person here in Canada and, indeed, around the world. I recommend that all members of the House get a copy of his speech that he delivered April 2, 2012, to the 125th anniversary of the Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce. In that speech, he provided a detailed analysis of Canada exporting in the post-crisis world.

One of the things that he talked about—and it was mentioned by the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan. He said in his speech, “Between 2000 and 2007, Canada’s unit labour costs rose 80% relative to our trading partners” because of the rapid appreciation of our currency. He said that never before has any economy experienced such a rapid appreciation of their currency in such a short period of time. In his analysis, he said that that had put tremendous pressure on Canada and Ontario’s economy.

You don’t have to take my word for it. In his analysis, he said, “Our labour market has bounced back too. All of the 430,000 jobs lost through the recession had been recovered as of early last year, and a further 180,000 jobs have been added since then. Most of the jobs created have been in the private sector and in industries paying above-average wages.”

The wisdom of us delaying the next round of our corporate income tax cut: On page 9 of his speech, he said, “Canadian corporate balance sheets are extremely healthy, with record low leverage and very high levels of liquidity.”

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments or questions?

Mr. Jim McDonnell: It’s interesting to sit on this side and listen to some of the spin. I had the opportunity, being a new mayor in 2003, just after this government took over, and sitting at ROMA and seeing the amount of money that they went and spent that was unbudgeted that year: a total of about \$3 billion. When they talk about the \$4.5 billion that they inherited, they don’t talk about the \$3 billion that they added to it.

I’m not sure what they added between the month of October and the month of March, but I imagine it was considerable if they added \$3 billion in two weeks.

I remember our then member of Parliament saying that he was so busy making announcements, he was going to have to carry them over into April, but the money was flowing so it counted in last year’s budget. It was just an example of the truth that we don’t expect out of this government anymore.

We talk about hydro rates. We’re at a point where we have the highest in North America, but they’ve got a solution: They’re going to take the big companies and they’re going to reduce it for them, and the rest of the province will pay the difference. It’s like nobody has to pay these bills.

I mean, their own consultant came out and warned them about their spending. Our leader, Tim Hudak, met

with them before the budget, with the Premier, and laid out what we needed to support this budget. Of course, they refuse to admit that he did meet, but he did meet and actually followed up with a letter saying that we needed a couple of things: control the spending and jobs. That’s all we asked for and we got a document that has nothing, none of these.

It’s a spin when you go through this. They take credit for some of the new mining jobs in Thunder Bay. Well, it’s great. The price of gold has gone up 10 times. I would hope there would be a lot more jobs in these areas. We’re not talking about \$300 an ounce; we’re talking about something well over \$1,000. This is the spin we get every day, and it’s time—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Speaker, I’d like to thank the members from Durham, Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, Peterborough and Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

When we talk about the deficit, I always like to just put a bit of context around it, because, of course, those who will criticize us will talk about and explain out to the people who they’re speaking to as if Ontario is the only jurisdiction in the world that had some challenges when it came to the recession and maintaining balanced-budget positions. The person and the government that I always like to compare us to is Stephen Harper and the federal Conservative government of Canada.

Mr. Harper, as I like to describe him, is probably—and this isn’t critical; this is just my view of him—the most right-wing ideologue in the history of Canada who we’ve ever had as a Prime Minister. I mean, he was from the Reform Party, and then they became the Conservative Party, and he became Prime Minister. I congratulate him for that. But we do know that as a Conservative and as a former Reformer, there has probably never been anybody who has been more ideologically predisposed against taking on deficits and debt than Mr. Harper and the federal Conservative government. Well, guess what happened to them during the recession, right? Just guess what happened to them.

Never mind Greece, never mind Spain, never mind France, never mind Ireland, never mind the United States, never mind all these other major democracies and capitalist countries around the planet who went into major deficit during the course of the recession; just compare yourself to the federal Conservative government with the most right-wing, ideologically opposed economist Prime Minister who we’ve ever had in our history, who took on a very, very large deficit. So if you need any information or education around the challenge that came to all governments during the course of the recession, I don’t think you have to look too far for comparisons. Thank you very much, Speaker.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): It being close to—this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1013 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Rod Jackson: I'd like to introduce Jana Smith from Barrie, also a law student at the University of Windsor, and welcome her to the chamber this morning.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Introduction of guests? The member for—

Mr. Frank Klees: Newmarket–Aurora.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, no. I was looking behind you, and the gentleman now has sat, so I will recognize the member from Newmarket–Aurora.

Mr. Frank Klees: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to extend a welcome to Mr. Farid Wassef from Whitchurch-Stouffville. Farid, no doubt, is well known to the member from Oak Ridges–Markham as well. He is a very highly respected pharmacist from Whitchurch-Stouffville. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am very pleased to welcome, from the Asthma Plan of Action's work-related asthma committee, Dr. Gary Liss; the director of respiratory health programs at the Ontario Lung Association, Carole Madeley; the provincial manager of government relations at the Ontario Lung Association, Elizabeth Harvey; and Kait Wallace, public affairs coordinator at the Ontario Lung Association.

Speaker, I have other people I'd like to welcome. Can I keep going? I will, yes. I'm very pleased that SEIU's, the Service Employees International Union's, registered practical nurse day is today. And of course, today is the OMA thank-a-doctor day, and I know we all want to thank our doctors today.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I want to welcome to the west members' gallery the family of Thornhill page Andrew Mohan: his sister Veronica is here; his brother Christopher; and his mother, Deborah. Welcome to Queen's Park.

MEMBER'S PRIVILEGES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On April 24, 2012, the member from Burlington, Mrs. McKenna, rose on a point of privilege concerning the impact of automated telephone calls on her ability to carry out her MPP duties. The government House leader, Mr. Milloy, the member for Parkdale–High Park, Ms DiNovo, the member for Simcoe–Grey, Mr. Wilson, the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, Mr. Yakabuski, and the member for Cambridge, Mr. Leone, also spoke to this matter.

Having had an opportunity to review the Hansard for that day, the information provided to me in the notice and the relevant procedural authorities, I am now prepared to rule on the matter.

The member's point of privilege relates to automated telephone calls sent to thousands of constituents in her riding. The calls, which she claims are sponsored by the Ontario Liberal Party, indicate that the member was, at the behest of her party, planning to vote against the forthcoming budget motion, thereby forcing an expensive, unwanted election and jeopardizing funding for a local

hospital. The calls, which indicated that the member needed to put families first, allowed constituents to share their concerns with her by pressing number 3 on their telephone keypad; this action would automatically connect them to the phone number of the member's office. The member's office was inundated with over 1,500 telephone calls that swamped its telephone line and voice mail system.

According to the member, this resulted in the following: Some constituents could not reach the member; the member had to deal with the telephone calls generated by the automated calls, instead of telephone calls from other constituents; and there were service complaints that unjustly damaged her reputation with her constituents.

The member was of the view that the automated calls obstructed and interfered with her parliamentary duties and therefore established a *prima facie* case of privilege.

Before determining whether there is a *prima facie* case on the basis of obstruction, let me first say that I will not assess the veracity or the tone of the allegations or the opinions made in the automated calls. It is not for the Speaker to say that they are misleading, inaccurate, false or inflammatory. Given the political nature of their workplace, members are often exposed to criticisms for their actions or, indeed, intended actions. Dealing with allegations, opinions and criticisms is part of the job of an MPP.

That being said, there can be no doubt that obstruction or interference with the member in respect of his or her parliamentary duties can be a matter of privilege. Many of the relevant authorities on the nature of obstruction were mentioned by the members who spoke to the matter on Tuesday last. I will not refer to them in this ruling. However, what needs to be said is that a member's constituency casework and other constituency responsibilities, while important, are by their very nature distinct from the member's parliamentary responsibilities.

As Speaker Carr indicated on page 30 of the Journals for April 26, 2001, "Speakers have consistently found—supported by the procedural authorities in a multitude of precedents—that privilege attaches only to a member's parliamentary duties, and not subsidiary duties away from Parliament."

Furthermore, citation 92 in the sixth edition of Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules and Forms states as follows: "A valid claim of privilege in respect to interference with a member must relate to the member's parliamentary duties and not to the work the member does in relation to that member's constituency."

The privilege that protects the members in respect of what he or she says and does in this House and its committees is known as parliamentary privilege. A privilege known as constituency privilege does not exist in Ontario or any other jurisdiction that subscribes to the Westminster model of Parliament. To those who would claim that this demarcation relegates members' constituency responsibilities to a courtesy or an inferior status, I would say that parliamentary privilege provides members with a set of legal rights and exemptions that more than 13

million other Ontarians do not have. The glass is half-full, not half-empty.

The member for Burlington states that her reputation has been damaged because of the numerous service-related complaints that were made after the automated calls interfered with her office's usual routine. I would agree with the member that damage to a member's reputation can amount to obstruction if the member is prevented from carrying out his or her parliamentary functions.

I would make the following observations about the application of this proposition to the facts in the case at hand: First, the member did not indicate how the remarks in and the unwelcome consequences of the automated calls prevented her from carrying out parliamentary duties. For example, the member did not claim that the automated calls prevented her from speaking in the House on the budget motion or from voting on the motion. The calls only appear to have affected her non-parliamentary duties, which, as I've already indicated, are not protected by parliamentary privilege. The best that can be said is that the impact on the member's parliamentary duties has been indirect or tangential, which is not enough to make a case for obstruction based on damage to the member's reputation.

Second, many of the rulings mentioned in the House of Commons Procedure and Practice that are authority for the proposition that damage to a member's reputation can amount to obstruction deal with MPs' use of Commons mailing privileges to send misleading information to another MP's constituents. In the case at hand, however, there is no indication that assembly resources were used to produce or disseminate the automated calls.

Third, the member for Burlington refers to a remark made in a 1985 ruling of Speaker Bosley of the Canadian House of Commons. That ruling is about an advertisement that identified a former MP as an MP. This is not the situation in the case at hand.

Fourth, I have reviewed the December 13, 2011, Canadian House of Commons ruling involving an incident where an MP's constituents were the subject of an organized telephone campaign survey that, in the view of the MP, negatively affected his reputation. I have also reviewed the March 6, 2012, Canadian House of Commons ruling dealing with an incident in which an MP's office was inundated with telephone calls, emails and faxes that, in the view of the MP, hindered him and his staff from serving his constituents and that prevented constituents from contacting him in a timely matter. In both cases, Speaker Scheer ruled that a *prima facie* case of privilege was not established because the MP had been able to perform his parliamentary duties.

For these reasons, a *prima facie* case of privilege has not been established.

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That being said, I have considerable sympathy for the difficult spot that the member for Burlington found herself in last week. Like other members, I have no doubt that she strives to serve her constituents to the best of her

abilities, regardless of how they contact her. Although I cannot prevent an outside organization from using automated technology to facilitate constituents' contact with their member, I would encourage members and parties to disassociate themselves from any technologically based communication that is inspired by political calculus that detracts from civil discourse on public business, just as I would discourage any member from crossing into another member's riding by any means, for the purpose expressly to discredit that member. In other words, take the high road. Reach for the top, not the bottom.

I thank the member for Burlington, the government House leader, the member from Parkdale-High Park, the member from Simcoe-Grey, the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke and the member for Cambridge for speaking to this matter.

ORAL QUESTIONS

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Steve Clark: Speaker, my question is to the Premier. Last week's credit rating action by S&P and credit rating downgrade by Moody's were a scathing indictment of this government's managerial competence. But sadly, your managerial incompetence reaches much further than that. Exhibit A: Ornge. Despite warning after warning after warning from this side of the House, stakeholders and whistle-blowers at Ornge, you let Ornge carry on, business as usual.

Premier, you're either implicated or incompetent. Which is it?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It's always a pleasure to receive these uplifting questions, Speaker. It must take a lot of energy every day to get up and be in a bad mood and to wish for rain. I say to my honourable colleagues in the official opposition, to twist a phrase a little bit: Into every life a little sunshine must fall.

I say to my honourable colleague that they, of course, have a different interpretation of the credit rating agencies. I thought they were very clear in saying that we have done a very good job in terms of the assumptions that we have made, in terms of the targets that we have set. They have expressed some concerns about our capacity as a minority government to deliver on our plan, which is again why I extend the hand of co-operation to the official opposition to work with us to ensure that together we can deliver on our plan.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: Premier, just like the scandals that happened on your watch at eHealth, OLG, Cancer Care Ontario, the Niagara Parks Commission and the LHINs, the Ornge scandal demonstrates that you've lost all ability to oversee government agencies.

The scandals at eHealth, OLG and the LHINs were blown out by freedom-of-information requests initiated by the Ontario PC caucus. We dragged the details of

these scandals to light while you kicked, screamed and fought us at every step.

Is the reason your new air ambulance legislation blocks freedom-of-information requests because you know you don't have the managerial competence to keep an eye on Ornge?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, my honourable colleague, on behalf of his party, claims that they have a genuine interest in enhancing oversight and transparency associated with Ornge. Yet we have a bill before this very Legislature, we would like to move forward with debate, but on both occasions that we've done that, they've chosen instead to ring the bells, to act in an obstructionist way and to prevent us from engaging in a positive, constructive debate and working together. Sadly, it's not just on the matter of Ornge; it's on so many other bills as well.

I say to my honourable colleagues that there is an additional responsibility that they bear in the context of a minority government, and it is to find a way to work with the government, to do the people's business. Let's move that particular bill forward, and let's move the so many others forward that Ontarians want us to get forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: Back to the Premier: I'm glad, Premier, you mentioned ringing the bells, because for months, the PC and NDP caucuses have been calling for an all-party select committee to investigate Ornge, to find out what happened and to ensure it never happens again. At every step of the way, the Premier, the government House leader, the Minister of Health and the Liberal members on the public accounts committee have stood in the way.

Is the reason you won't call an all-party select committee to investigate Ornge because you don't want us to find out the true cost of your managerial incompetence?

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We witness yet another standing no, Speaker.

My honourable colleague will know that the committee has already held four days of hearings, they've heard from 22 witnesses, they've received so far 15 hours of testimony and I expect that that committee will continue its work for some time to come.

But on the matter of being obstructionist, I want again to draw to your attention the fact that on the Accepting Schools Act, the official opposition has decided to ring the bells 10 times. When it comes to a bill that would better manage the rent increases in Ontario to better protect millions of tenants, they've rung the bells 10 times. On the Family Caregiver Leave Act, something we'd like to move ahead with on behalf of all of our families, they have rung the bells six times.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. All members come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will now identify individuals.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Last, but hardly least, on the matter of our air ambulance act, those important amendments we'd like to introduce, they've rung the bells twice, Speaker. Again I say to my honourable colleagues, if you were a little less obstructionist and a little bit more constructive, we'd do a lot of work together.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Minister of Health. At its April 25 hearing into the Ornge scandal, the public accounts committee heard from Lynne Golding, a partner and director of the health law practice group with Fasken Martineau DuMoulin LLP. Ms. Golding testified under oath that she was one of a team of lawyers who provided advice to Ornge on a range of significant matters, including the 2005 performance agreement and its federal incorporation. Does the minister have any reason to believe that Ms. Golding would be anything but truthful in her sworn testimony?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, as the Premier indicated, the public accounts committee proceeds—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean—Carleton and the member from Leeds—Grenville, come to order.

Hon. John Milloy: —with the matter of Ornge. There are hearings going on; they're hearing from witnesses. But if the honourable member wishes to conduct hearings on the floor of this Legislature during question period, if he wants to talk about what Lynne Golding spoke about at committee, then let's talk about Lynne Golding and the work that she did with Guy Giorno—two of the most prominent Conservative lawyers in Canada. Here is the advice—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Peterborough, come to order.

Hon. John Milloy: —provided to Chris Mazza. They said that it was fine to refuse putting his \$1.4-million salary on the sunshine list, and he followed that advice and hid that salary. They told him that he didn't have to co-operate with the Auditor General, and he did not. They told him how to create the web of for-profit entities and he followed it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: The government House leader fails to tell the total truth. The fact is—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will withdraw.

Mr. Frank Klees: The fact of the matter is that Ms. Golding also advised Ornge—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You must stand and withdraw.

Mr. Frank Klees: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Carry on.

Mr. Frank Klees: The fact of the matter is that Ms. Golding, if the House leader was willing to go just a bit further in reading those transcripts, also said that they advised Ornge to disclose those salaries.

I would like to know this: According to Ms. Golding, it was very clear that the federal incorporation in no way interfered with the Minister of Health intervening at Ornge. In fact, she told the committee that five public hospitals in Ontario did the identical federal incorporation. Why did the minister not act? Is it because she didn't know the truth or that she was misled by her civil servants?

Hon. John Milloy: As I've indicated before, I will take the word of the Auditor General of Ontario, an officer of this Legislature, over that of a lawyer who told Chris Mazza how to hide his \$1.4-million salary.

What did the Auditor General have to say at his March 21 press conference? He said, "The performance agreement was weak and it was not adequate, and it needed to be significantly strengthened. The ministry has stepped in and taken concrete action."

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In the Auditor General's report itself, he says on page 12, "The performance agreement has only two specific and measurable response-time requirements relating to requests for air ambulance services.... The additional corporate entities that Ornge unilaterally created were not covered by the performance agreement...."

Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General found significant weaknesses with the performance agreement, which have been addressed by the Minister of Health and are going to be addressed through Bill 50.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: I really wish the House leader would attend those meetings so that he would know precisely what's going on there, because he doesn't have the full context, and he's letting people know partially what has happened there. That is not being forthright.

What we heard at that committee is that the ministry took some 10 months to negotiate that contract. It was headed up by Dennis Brown, the lead ministry negotiator. That agreement imposed some 15 pages of covenants on Ornge, on which the ministry could have acted at any time to intervene at Ornge. Those were the facts that were given to the committee.

I'd like to know from the minister: Was she aware of those 15 pages of covenants? Did she stand in this place and say that she had no authority because she really believed that, or was she misled by her own ministry?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Again, page 16 of the Auditor General's report: The performance agreement "does not allow the ministry to recover any unspent air ambulance funding...." The performance agreement "does not entitle the ministry to access the books and records of any of the entities that Ornge directly controls...."

Mr. Speaker, there were serious weaknesses in terms of the oversight of Ornge. The Minister of Health has taken action to fix it, but the final piece of the puzzle is Bill 50. And when we brought it up for debate yesterday, what did that member and his party do? They rang the bells in an irresponsible, childish manner.

It's time they stood up and joined with us to pass Bill 50 and make sure that we bring forward the types of reforms that will address the problems that have been faced by Ornge.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Today, electricity prices will rise again for Ontario's businesses and residents. Can the Premier tell us how the price of Ontario's electricity compares to the prices in provinces to our east and to our west?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I say to my honourable colleague—and I welcome the question—in an ideal world, we would be as blessed as the provinces are to the east and the west of us when it comes to hydroelectric capacity. But we don't live in that ideal world; we live in this one.

We got to work, busily, shortly after we formed the government. We've invested billions of dollars in new transmission and in new generation. We are shutting down our coal-fired generation. We are cleaning up our air—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, come to order.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: —that, in essence, is our plan, and I'm sure my honourable colleague supports it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Yes, it's true, Speaker: We used to be blessed with a public power system in the province of Ontario. Unfortunately, that is no longer the case.

Manitoba Hydro produced some of the price comparisons today, which tell a tough story for families and businesses in this province. A household in Winnipeg will pay \$73 for electricity this month. The same household in Montreal will pay \$68. But in Toronto, the same family will pay \$119 a month, and in Englehart, Ontario, it's \$143—twice as much.

How does the Premier explain to families that they can save \$800 a year for electricity simply by moving to another province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I draw to my honourable colleague's attention—you know those wooden hydro poles that we see? They don't last forever. Every once in a while, you've got to invest in their repair and

replacement. The same applies to our nuclear generators. It applies to the expansion that we're making at Niagara Falls, the biggest project of its kind in the world.

There are considerable dollars that have to flow in order to make investments in generation and transmission. We've put together more new transmission, in terms of either replacing it or repairing it, that would take us from here to Alaska. We're talking about thousands and thousands of kilometres of new transmission. There's a cost associated with that in order to ensure that we have access to good-quality, reliable power. I'm sure my colleague understands that as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: For people worried about jobs and making ends meet, the record seems pretty clear: Ontario's private power boondoggles are making life more expensive for people and for businesses. Large industrial users in Toronto are paying the highest rates in the country—literally, \$3 million more a month than in other provinces. Isn't it time for the Premier to consider a different approach?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to remind my honourable colleague that Hydro One and OPG are publicly owned utilities. They're owned by the people of Ontario. The 5% of our electricity bills today that we are receiving as Ontarians is connected to our feed-in tariff program. The increases that we've been experiencing are to ensure that we invested in a lot more transmission and a lot more generation.

The fact of the matter is, it's a little bit more expensive for us to move beyond coal, but we think, in speaking to our families, that that's something that is a worthwhile investment on our part. At the same time, we're creating thousands of new jobs and an exciting new clean energy sector, something that Ontarians are embracing.

ELECTRICITY RESTRUCTURING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. This government intends to move forward with a comprehensive review of the electricity sector, and it's clear that the McGuinty Liberals' private power deals need to be part of that review. Can the Premier assure us that this is going to be the case?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: We are taking a look at all aspects of the energy sector to make sure that families and businesses have the power they need, when they need it, at the least possible cost.

I just want to remind all members of the House that today is World Asthma Day, a day when those, and many in this province and this country, who have serious medical illnesses look for clean air. At the heart of the approach we've taken to energy from the time we got elected, we're getting out of coal; we're cleaning up the air; we're making sure people can breathe clean air and build an exciting new economy along with it.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Nepean—Carleton, come to order.

Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: After nearly a decade of growing bureaucracy and a web of private power deals, the government is finally conceding that their plan isn't working. They took a baby step towards reform by merging the IESO and the OPA, but families are still on the hook for private power boondoggles like the mess that happened in Mississauga, where we're paying millions and millions of dollars not to build a power plant.

It's time for a change, Speaker. Is this Premier ready to actually work on fixing the mess in Ontario's electricity system, or are we just going to see more of the same?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I know that the leader of the third party will support us as we look everywhere in the electricity sector to find ways to take costs out. She mentioned the two agencies that we're consolidating, and that's important. Take costs out of the system; make it work better.

The two public utilities that we have, OPG and Hydro One: We've already taken more than half a billion dollars of costs out of those, and we will continue to look for more. We have a panel looking at all of the local utilities in the province to see if they can work more effectively. We're benchmarking all of our agencies by international standards to see if we can take costs out. And, of course, we take 10% off the bottom line of every utility bill. That benefits every single family in this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Let me take a moment to remind the government what families actually see. The cost of daily life keeps climbing in this province, and they're feeling like they simply cannot keep up. The jobs that they need are being chased away by high hydro rates. The status quo is not working for them.

Is the Premier ready to actually look at change that makes their lives more affordable, or will this review just be another opportunity for the government to sell off more of our electricity assets and leave people paying the price?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: It's all about families and businesses and making sure that they have what they need at a price that's reasonable. The 10% clean energy benefit off the bottom line of the bill is something we proposed; the NDP was supportive of 8%. We have an energy and property tax credit, which the NDP voted against. We're taking a look at all of our agencies to take costs out.

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The fact of the matter is that job creation in this province, through a number of measures—energy, but also a reformed tax system—has been very robust; just last month, 46,000 jobs, more than any other province and the rest of the provinces in the country combined. We're very focused on making sure that families have the

job opportunities they need, and we'll continue to pursue it through energy and all other means at our disposal.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Todd Smith: My question is for the Minister of Health. Mr. Speaker, the minister owes this House an explanation. Throughout the investigation into the corruption at Ornge, the minister has defended her mismanagement and failure of leadership by repeatedly making claims that have been one by one refuted and rejected. We've learned that not a single one of the minister's lame excuses has any legitimacy whatsoever. What's worse is that the minister has allowed the Premier and members of her caucus to repeat these fabrications on several occasions, thereby discrediting—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will withdraw that comment.

Mr. Todd Smith: I withdraw, Mr. Speaker.

So I ask the minister: Are you comfortable with having embarrassed the Premier and all of your colleagues on the Liberal side?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The action we've taken to address the problems at Ornge has been pretty significant: completely new leadership, a new performance agreement, and now we have introduced legislation that will put in law the oversight that we require. We'll be able to put in a supervisor. I did not have that power; I will, if we can get Bill 50 passed.

Speaker, the members opposite are much more interested in playing childish political games. They've spent more time ringing bells than they have at public accounts. There's something out of balance. We want to get to work for the people of Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Supplementary?

Mr. Todd Smith: Mr. Speaker, we're tired of the excuses. They're bogus.

Let me recap: The minister claims to have fired the board—not true.

Interjections: Not true.

Mr. Todd Smith: The minister claims to have been unaware of the corporate restructuring—not true.

Interjections: Not true.

Mr. Todd Smith: The minister claims to have seen—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would ask that the question be put without the interventions, please.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you Mr. Speaker.

The minister claims she wasn't responsible during the election—not true.

Interjections: Not true.

Mr. Todd Smith: The minister claims to have had no authority over Ornge—not true.

Interjections: Not true.

Mr. Todd Smith: The minister claims that since Ornge was federally incorporated, she couldn't intervene—not true.

Interjections: Not true.

Mr. Todd Smith: The minister claims—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I am tempted to say "next question," but the next time it happens, I will.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you Mr. Speaker. There's just one more anyway: The minister claims her new legislation increases transparency at Ornge, and we know that's not true.

So I ask her, given that she has zero credibility, that every single one of her lame excuses has been refuted, will she finally provide the House with a straight answer? If she won't, will she resign?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The Auditor General, I think, is a highly regarded individual, and I'm relying on the Auditor General to give me advice on the changes we need to make. We are making the changes that the Auditor General recommended, and that includes Bill 50, legislation that you are blocking, that the members opposite are blocking, legislation that does enhance transparency and oversight.

Speaker, they can play games all they want, but I can tell you that we are trying to get the work done that the people of Ontario expect us to do. I wish they would just put the political games aside. Just let it pass and get to committee.

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Premier. Speaker, the Premier recently called Elizabeth Witmer exceptionally qualified to be the chair of the WSIB, but in opposition, this government slammed her policies on injured workers.

In May 1997, the Minister of the Environment said, "If anyone were injured on the job, they're going to find that under the provisions of Bill 99 they're going to be much worse off." The finance minister labelled those WSIB reforms as "an attack on working people" at the time.

How did this government go from calling Ms. Witmer's policies "an attack on working people" to now saying that she's exceptionally qualified for the job?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to remind my honourable colleague that it was only yesterday that we came together and in one voice celebrated the remarkable career of a dedicated public servant, Elizabeth Witmer.

I would also venture to say that the news of Ms. Witmer's appointment as head of the WSIB has been well received by both employers and workers alike. There are some tremendous challenges there associated with the unfunded liability and making sure our workers

are getting the benefits to which they are entitled as a result of being injured on the job.

It's a big job, Speaker, and I can't think of anyone better than Ms. Witmer. I encourage my honourable colleague to continue to lend support to her as she takes on this important job.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: There's no doubt that Ms. Witmer has a lot of experience, but we don't share her vision for the WSIB. When the government was sitting on this side of the House, they agreed with us. Here's the member for Eglinton–Lawrence in April 1997: Witmer's WSIB reform is "another attempt to download on to those who can't afford it, another hit from this government which just cares about pleasing their rich friends."

Is the Premier so desperate for a majority government that he's ready to play politics with important positions?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm not sure why my honourable colleague is so eager to pick a fight with Ms. Witmer—he says he doesn't share her vision—because she just got the job. She hasn't even laid out some of the principles that are going to inform her actions. But I think she's a great listener. I think she is very thoughtful. She's always shown herself to be progressive and I think she's going to be very open-minded.

I believe, Speaker, she'd be eager to meet with the honourable member and receive his concerns and listen to them well. I'm sure she'll hear from employers and workers alike as she takes on her responsibility. I think what we owe her, in fairness, is at least a bit of time for her to begin her new responsibilities.

ASTHMA

Ms. Helena Jaczek: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, as a physician, I know that in Ontario asthma effects almost one in five children aged zero to nine years. Approximately 8% of Ontario adults have been diagnosed with asthma. In fact, a person born in Ontario has a 34% risk of developing asthma before they reach 80 years of age, and it can be fatal.

Asthma is a significant cause of school and work absenteeism and it is also the most common reason for hospitalization of Ontario's children and places a heavy burden on emergency departments.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, to the minister: Today being World Asthma Day, what is this government doing to help those in Ontario suffering from asthma?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member for her question. I would like to recognize the people from the Ontario Lung Association who are here with us today and thank them for their advocacy and thank them for the work that they are doing.

We do have an exciting project. We're providing \$4.25 million this year for the Asthma Plan of Action. It's an integrated plan led by the Ontario Lung Associa-

tion to improve health outcomes and reduce the burden on our health care system.

The results are nothing short of astounding. Of those served by the primary care asthma program, asthma attacks have been decreased by almost 40%. Emergency department visits have been cut in half, as has absenteeism from work and school. Speaker, this is an exciting research project and we're very pleased with the way it's going.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Thank you, Minister. I know that my constituents are pleased that this government is taking such strong action to fight asthma.

Minister, one of the single biggest causes of asthma in the province is dirty coal-fired power generation. Coal pollutes the air and makes people sick. In 2003, this government made a commitment to get out of coal-fired power generation. This is the single largest climate change initiative in North America.

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In addition, Ontario's commitment to cleaner sources of energy, like wind, solar and hydro, is ensuring that our children and grandchildren have a brighter and healthier future. This is something my constituents are very proud of.

Minister, can you please share with this House the status of Ontario's efforts to replace dirty coal-fired power generation with cleaner sources by 2014?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, to the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: A very important question by my colleague. On this World Asthma Day, all those suffering with asthma or with any breathing difficulty will be celebrating clean air. We're cleaning up the air by getting out of coal, and I'm pleased to say we'll be out of coal completely by 2014. One of the ways we're doing that is to bring on new, clean, renewable energy. Whether it's wind, solar, bio or hydro, it keeps the air clean.

What does this mean? It means hundreds of thousands fewer illnesses; it means many thousands fewer hospital admissions; it means billions of dollars saved from the health care system that can be spent on other things. But what it really means for all those suffering from asthma or any other breathing challenge is that they'll be able to take a breath of clean air, and that's what we want for all of our families.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Rick Nicholls: My question is to the Minister of Health. You have blocked repeated attempts to prevent the opposition from getting to the bottom of the Liberal scandal at Ornge. You neglected your duties to hold management at Ornge accountable, and patient safety was put at risk.

Your new bill does not provide for additional oversight at Ornge, nor does it enable the Ombudsman to

investigate, nor does your bill make Ornge subject to freedom of information. Minister, what are you hiding?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, we have introduced Bill 50. Bill 50 takes important steps to increase oversight and transparency at Ornge. Some of the elements of Bill 50: It protects whistle-blowers. It allows us to change the performance agreement unilaterally; that was not a power we had. It also gives us the power to appoint a supervisor or an investigator, a power we have in our hospitals.

The people opposite are too busy ringing bells to actually get moving forward and pass this legislation. We welcome advice at committee. We look forward to getting this bill to committee, but we need to pass it on second reading before we can take that step.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Another end-around, Minister.

We know now, despite attempts to deflect, that the sordid Ornge story is connected to a long list of Liberal insiders: Liberal Party president Alf Apps; the Premier's right-hand man, Don Guy; senior Liberal staffer Jennifer Tracey; Warren Kinsella's squeeze, Lisa Kirbie; former chief of staff to the Minister of Health, Mary Lowe; the architect of eHealth, George Smitherman; Sandra Pupatello; and even the Minister of Finance.

Minister, is your new legislation just smoke and mirrors or an attempt to hide the true depths of the Liberal scandal at Ornge?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I think we all realize—

Interjection: It's a drive-by smear.

Hon. John Milloy:—how inappropriate that drive-by smear was that we just heard. There is an opportunity to have a spirited debate in front of the committee and to talk about witnesses.

But if he wants to play that game, then fine. Let's talk about Kelly Mitchell, who's in front of the public accounts committee tomorrow, along with Kelly Long, another witness that we're all interested in talking about.

Who is Kelly Mitchell? He is a prominent PC Party member. He was someone who raised thousands and thousands of dollars for the Progressive Conservative Party, and he was paid some \$400,000 by Ornge for the sole purpose of schmoozing and lobbying Progressive Conservative MPPs. Mr. Speaker, we look forward to hearing what he has to say—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre. The Premier has yet to answer my question about his former chief of staff and current campaign manager and confidante, Don Guy, who we learned billed Ornge \$125,000 for "professional services."

I'll ask again: When did the Premier first learn that his campaign strategist, Mr. Don Guy, was working for Ornge?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I understand that Mr. Guy will be appearing before the committee shortly. I know he's very much looking forward to that, and I'm sure that members opposite are looking forward to hearing from him.

But again, we have claims made on behalf of the opposition parties that they're interested in introducing new oversight and new measures of transparency to ensure that we can do a better job through Ornge, looking out for the interests of Ontarians.

There is a bill before this Legislature. It is Bill 50. It does present us with the opportunity to engage in debate. It does present us with the opportunity to receive potential amendments on the part of the opposition. In short, it gives us the opportunity to work together on behalf of the people of Ontario, and I would urge my honourable colleagues opposite to do just that. Let's debate the bill and let's stop ringing those bells.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Maybe the Premier forgot that I asked the question. I never rang any bells. The NDP never rang any bells. So I would appreciate it if you could answer the NDP when the NDP asks a question.

You're right, tomorrow Mr. Guy will appear in front of the committee examining Ornge. He will have to tell us under oath about the services he provided at Ornge, his relationship to you, Mr. Premier, and why he never cashed in on the last \$17,000 bill to Ornge.

The Premier has a chance right here, right now, to talk to this House before Mr. Guy does it tomorrow. Will the Premier explain whether Mr. Guy used his influence with the Premier's office in his work with Ornge?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Either it's on the line or it crosses over it, in terms of interfering with the work of the committee that's being done on behalf of all members, and I'd urge my honourable colleague to respect the work of that committee.

There is a committee. It has been sitting. I expect it will sit for several more weeks. A number of witnesses have appeared. I expect that many more will appear in the future. Again, I think we ought to respect the workings of that committee.

CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEM

Mr. Michael Coteau: My question is to the Minister of Children and Youth Services. I'm proud of the progress our government has made in child welfare since taking office. I know that fewer kids are coming into care and more kids are being placed into permanent homes.

As the MPP for Don Valley East, I find it of great importance that children and youth receiving protection and support from children's aid societies in my community have every opportunity to reach their full potential.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, to the minister: Can you outline the steps this government is taking to continue to improve our child protection system?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd first like to thank the member from Don Valley East for the question. A lot of members of this Legislature might not be aware of his tremendous record of community service, and I want to acknowledge and commend that, first of all.

I'd also like to thank all the incredible staff across this province that work hard each and every day on behalf of our children, particularly the most vulnerable. Their dedication helps to improve outcomes for children and youth right across this wonderful province.

This government, a number of years back, established the independent Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, which further shows our commitment to supporting a stronger and more responsive child welfare system in Ontario.

We also know that permanent homes provide kids with the best opportunities to succeed. In 2010-11, there were approximately 1,000 adoptions in the public system, an increase of 20% over the previous year. New legislation, as well, by this government means more than 7,000 crown wards—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Coteau: Thank you, Minister. I'm pleased that we've made significant achievements in child welfare here in Ontario. Many of the children and youth we're talking about here today represent some of the most vulnerable individuals in our society. We need to remain committed to ensuring that their well-being is a top priority.

I know that adoption is one of several ways that our government is helping children and youth find permanent, stable homes so they can reach their full potential. I ask the minister to describe how he and this government are working towards promoting a sustainable child welfare system more broadly.

1120

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I am pleased, of course, to respond to the question. In 2009, the Commission to Promote Sustainable Child Welfare was established to develop strategies that will strengthen service delivery and contribute to better outcomes for our children. We are already implementing some of the recommendations made by the commission to reduce the administrative burden on children's aid societies and make them more efficient in supporting Ontario's kids.

Together with the commission, my ministry is working towards the development of a new funding model, the establishment of new approaches to accountability and outcome management, and improvements in service delivery and financial management through implementation of the child protection information network.

Our reforms will result in a stronger, more effective system.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Good morning, Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Energy. Minister, today the Ontario hydro rates increased yet again all across Ontario. When you pay ultra-rich fees for wind and solar, someone has to pay the difference, and that someone is every householder, every senior and every business.

Yesterday, Minister, you denied the increase was the result of your failed renewable energy approach. Then you added a quote: "That will come on more in the future." So, Minister, if families are getting a shock today when they open their bills, just how much more can they expect, as you say, in the future?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: It does give me an opportunity, on World Asthma Day, to speak to the elimination of coal, to speak to cleaning up the air, to speak of making sure that we don't burn coal to make hundreds of thousands of people sick, that we don't burn coal so we can spend billions of dollars in health care for those sick people, but that we actually make sure we get the power we need from clean sources—some hydro, some wind, some solar, some bio.

We are dedicated to making sure that every Ontarian has the air, the clean air, that they need and want to breathe, that we save billions of dollars, and that we build a good, strong, clean green energy industry in the process.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My supplementary to the minister is, we both know that your purchase of wind has actually replaced clean, green, renewable water power in Ontario. Coal, which you have never closed, has been replaced by nuclear and natural gas plants. So let's please stick to the facts. Your failed energy program has sent families' hydro bills skyrocketing yet again this morning. On TVO's Agenda, Tony Keller called your energy plan "a power scheme that is as ecologically ineffective as it is economically incoherent."

Minister, what are you going to do to keep Ontario from having the highest energy bills in North America?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Speaker, a breath of fresh air is what the facts often bring. It's said that action is eloquence. My friend referred to hydroelectric power, in the same day when the Premier referred to us bringing on the largest hard-rock tunnel in the world, in Niagara Falls, so we have more hydroelectric power. At the same time, we're bringing on power through the lower Mattagami, south of James Bay, that will light up hundreds of thousands of homes, at the same time as the member himself is a secret green, having put solar panels on the roof of city hall.

We're getting out of coal for all the reasons that people who have breathing difficulties respect. It's time the member opposite admits that clean air does mean something to people in Ontario.

GENERIC DRUG INDUSTRY

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question is to the Premier. Experts across the country are concerned that Canada's trade agreement with Europe will delay more affordable generic drugs from coming on the market, costing the province a fortune. Even the Drummond commission expressed concern, noting that the agreement "could cost Ontario dearly" and recommended that the province prevent the trade agreement from undermining its use of generics. Why is the Premier not taking an active role in keeping this costly proposal off the table?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The member opposite is correct. Ontario is at a side table at the negotiations going on with the European Union on free trade. There are a variety of issues related to access to foreign markets of Canadian-produced generic drugs.

I remind the member opposite that most generics are produced here in Ontario. They are marketed around the world. We're proud of our generic drug industry. I hope the third party are not trying to prevent the export of generic drugs and at the same time cost jobs in the generic job industry. That's not much of a jobs policy, I say with respect to my colleagues.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: In February, researchers at the University of Calgary and the University of Toronto reported that if the pharmaceutical intellectual property proposals in CETA, the Canada-European trade agreement, are adopted, it could cost Ontario up to \$1.2 billion annually. This would cancel out \$550 million in savings estimated from generic drug price reductions and add \$672 million to private sector and individual drug costs.

Minister of Finance, there is no empirical evidence that extending drug patents will have any benefits for Ontarians. Why is the Premier putting brand name drug companies' profits ahead of the public good?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We've reduced the cost of generic drugs some \$600 million as a result of the good work of the Minister of Health and my colleagues on this side. Ontario obviously is striving for a fair as well as free trade deal with the European Union. That's why we are at a side table in those negotiations, as was the request of the European Union.

I would urge the member great caution with respect to generic drugs. Ontario is one of the leading producers of generic drugs in the world. We export a good portion of those. They create good-paying jobs right here in Ontario. I would not want to jeopardize those jobs—

Interjection: Union jobs.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Yes, they're unionized jobs. I wouldn't want to jeopardize those jobs because we have our head in the sand with respect to the importance of access to foreign markets. We will continue to negotiate in good faith to get the best deal possible for all Ontarians.

ELDER ABUSE

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Ma question est pour le ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées.

My question is for the minister responsible for seniors. Minister, as you'll know, according to the Ontario Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse, unfortunately, something on the order of about 2% to 10% of older adults experience some form of elder abuse, even these days. I unfortunately see this in my dual capacity not only as a parliamentarian but also as a physician. I think this is a particularly alarming figure, given that it's so contradictory to our values of respect for the environment, for ourselves and, of course, for our families.

People in my riding want to know about the initiatives and the programs that our government is doing in order to protect our parents, our grandparents and our loved ones. I would ask you, Minister, to share with this House and with Ontarians what specifics our government is offering.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I want to thank the member from Etobicoke North for this very important question. Elder abuse is a very serious problem that often remains hidden due to fear, shame and a lack of awareness—certainly no senior wants to talk about it—and I thank the member for bringing this important issue forward.

We want all Ontarians to know that elder abuse in any form is not acceptable, and our government is working hard to create a secure and supportive environment for our seniors. Since 2003, Ontario has invested \$6 million in elder abuse prevention. This includes an annual operating funding budget of \$900,000 to the Ontario Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse. And in 2011, our government supported an international forum on the abuse of older women to raise awareness of this under-reported and often silent form of elder abuse.

Our government is also supporting initiatives that give Ontario seniors the information they need to protect themselves against abuse and fraud. We met with the Bank of Canada and hosted a successful conference for seniors on financial abuse and financial awareness.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Thank you, Minister. I appreciate learning more about the initiatives that our government has and the commitment that the McGuinty government has against elder abuse. It's particularly important, as I mentioned earlier, for me and my constituents in the riding of Etobicoke North that Ontarians feel safe and respected.

1130

I'll bring to your attention that while the federal government has decided to focus on punishment for individuals, as I might say is typical for that world view, we know that once assault has taken place, individuals, even though they may have been punished—it does not stop for the victim there. Can the minister please inform this House, this chamber, what supports are in place to help victims of elder abuse to actually regain their place in their own communities?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: To the Attorney General.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Our government, and I hope everyone here, has zero tolerance for elder abuse. As a government, we have a responsibility to do everything we can to protect society's most vulnerable, and they include, of course, our senior citizens.

Seniors who experience victimization or abuse have access to a number of victim services support programs. The Ontario victim response services program in my ministry works with the Ontario Seniors' Secretariat that the minister is involved in on ways to better support victims of elder abuse. As a matter of fact, we've provided 5.4 million of our common tax dollars from the victims' justice fund to support Ontario's elder abuse strategy, delivered by the Ontario Seniors' Secretariat.

We are committed to keeping our communities safe and our most vulnerable safe, and they include, of course, our senior citizens.

GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Minister, the Liberal government has been busy working on a carbon tax scheme since 2008, when Ontario signed on to the Western Climate Initiative. But just last November, Arizona, Montana, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah and Washington abandoned this agreement to find more responsible ways to reduce carbon emissions. Now even BC is waffling on implementing this job-killing agreement. But, Minister, you've remained silent, so I have to ask: Has this Liberal government decided to abandon the Western Climate Initiative, or are you just simply hiding your plans to introduce a carbon tax scheme?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Mr. Speaker, this was a trick that the Conservative Party used during the last campaign: They tried to portray something that may not have a degree of accuracy that we would accept in the House.

As the member knows, no such plans exist in the province of Ontario except in the minds of the people who write your questions for question period. That is the crew in Conservative research who dream up scenarios that simply do not exist.

I want to give the member some advice. Don't pay attention to the whiz kids in the Conservative caucus office. Think about some good questions yourself, which I know you would have, and forget about the tales that these people put into your mind.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Harris: Minister, I seem to recall several of your colleagues in the last election musing, in fact, about a carbon tax scheme, so I'll ask you again: If your government is still committed to this carbon tax scheme, then why did you miss the January 1 start date to begin implementing it?

History has shown that the Liberal government is incapable of prudent economic management. Instead of making tough decisions and cutting spending, the Liberal government has, yet again, turned back to its tax-and-

spend playbook to find another way to take more money out of the pockets of hard-working Ontarians.

Minister, now that the Liberal government has been given a failing grade by two major credit rating agencies, how could you and your government continue to think that introducing a job-killing carbon tax scheme in Ontario is a good idea?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I think the member has been reading the book *Alice in Wonderland*, because he is developing in his mind scenarios that simply do not exist.

I know that Mr. Hillier's party in Alberta—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm suspecting that the heckling will stop when I stand. Thank you.

Minister.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I know that the member from Lanark, my good friend, does not believe in climate change, as did Wildrose in Alberta.

But I want to say to you that even the party that has your name in the province of Alberta, the party that perhaps many of your people did not support, the Progressive Conservative Party, believes that, in fact, climate change portrays a major problem in this province. I hope that you are not—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Peterborough, come to order.

The member from Timiskaming-Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you, Speaker. My question is for the—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Cambridge is now warned.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Minister, on April 25, I asked you if you would allow ONTC to bid on an outstanding Via Rail contract that was coming up. A company had gone bankrupt, and workers in North Bay have the skills and the shops to do it. Your response was, "Everything in ONTC is business as usual. Everything's fine."

Today, we found out your ministry had advised ONTC that it will not authorize any resources to secure any long-term work, even though three contracts are there within reach that would sustain the thousand jobs that ONTC creates, especially the jobs of the shops in North Bay.

What exactly does "business as usual" mean for you, Minister, when you're choosing to suppress jobs in North Bay instead of creating them?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Speaker, I stand behind the comments I made at the time of divestment when I said that, as we work through divestment, it will be business as usual. I stand by the comments that I made in response to three questions from the third party with regard to “business as usual.”

It is business as usual, and as usual, we would hope that that business case provides opportunity for the ONTC, provides revenue for the ONTC. We believe that it is important that everyone along the Highway 11 corridor clearly understands that while we divest, it is business as usual.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Vanthof: Well, I'd like to make one thing clear. We disagree on one thing: They would like to sell the ONTC; we want to build.

But one thing we hopefully do agree on is that business creates jobs. The one thing—whether you want to sell the company or build it, the longer your order list is for upcoming contracts, the better it is. So once again, why did your ministry direct the ONTC that you weren't going to give any resources, spend anything to try to get those contracts? Even if you want to sell the company, you're better off with those contracts, and North Bay is certainly better off with those jobs. It's not one contract; it's three contracts worth \$120 million.

Minister, it's your choice. Do you support ONTC's bid to go after those contracts or not? If it's true that it's business as usual, is business as usual killing the ONTC?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Speaker, I'm a little bit perplexed, because now we're in agreement on a couple of things: one, that divestment is in the best interests of a long-term transportation strategy. Secondly, we believe that if, in fact, there are lucrative contracts, it makes the opportunity to sell this particular business line much, much better—because this is not what they would say it is.

The OTNC will not be put up for a fire sale. We believe that it is a good business line. We don't believe that the business model is correct. We believe that with this type of acquisition in the future by the private sector, that will allow for a transportation system that meets the present and future needs. That ensures that there will be a stable, reliable transportation system that will not cost the government \$100 million a year.

BUILDING CODE

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. In the new reality of the times in which we live, conservation and energy efficiency are becoming more and more important. I understand that in keeping with this new reality there have been recent changes in the building code that came into effect at the start of the year to make Ontario a leader in energy efficiency requirements.

Minister, my constituents want to know what these changes are and why they are coming into effect now. Could you please inform the climate change deniers

across the way in the Conservative Party more about conservation?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want to thank the member for all that he has done to raise the profile of this issue because the new realities of energy efficiency and conservation—they really are things that we all have to wrap our minds around. The building code is one of those mechanisms that, in addition to driving efficiency and conservation, can have the added benefit of saving money for Ontarians.

One of the purposes of the Ontario building code actually is to conserve energy and water. We amended the building code in 2006 to increase energy conservation requirements for houses and larger buildings and to reduce barriers to the use of green technologies. These changes have been phased in over time.

The final energy enhancements came into effect on January 1 of this year, and these new requirements mean a couple of things. They mean that, as set out in the 2006 building code, large buildings constructed and building permits issued on or after January 1, 2012, must meet energy efficiency standards that are 25% higher than the model national energy code for buildings.

Secondly, enhanced energy efficiency requirements for houses also came into force at the start of the year, and new houses will be required to meet an energy performance level that's equal to the EnerGuide 80 performance level.

MEMBER'S COMMENTS

Mr. Gilles Bisson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Earlier this morning in question period, a Conservative member used some, I think, not only unparliamentary language, but language that's unbecoming of being used in our society, referring to a certain individual's squeeze. I'm not going to say the names. I only ask you to review the Hansard and to come back and rule on the question. Should we be using those types of terms here in the Legislature? I just want to say, as a man, I found that extremely offensive.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank the member. It is not the habit of the Speaker to review Hansard to review a request being made, but it is a legitimate point of order. If there was a member that asked a question today, I obviously did not hear it because of the thrust and parry of the House. But if someone that asked a question did say something that was not in keeping with the place, I would offer them an opportunity to withdraw.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Speaker?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Chatham-Kent-Essex.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to my colleague. I withdraw my comment, and I sincerely apologize for making that statement.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Now, that's how it's done. I thank the member for doing so.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): At this time I'm going to offer a point of order that is not a point of order: I will introduce my wife, Rosemarie. With them—to continue getting the brownie points—are the rest of that side of the family: my brother-in-law and sister-in-law, Ron and Marcene Kovach—I thank you for being with us; my Aunt Ann and Uncle Andy are here, and my cousin Carolann is with us as well. I thank you for your patience. That definitely got me a few brownie points.

This House now has no deferred votes. It stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1144 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased today to rise and recognize the registered practical nurses who are here today. I appreciate the time I spent with them at noon. Thank you very much.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We welcome our guests.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ENERGY RATES

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Effective today, Ontario households and businesses will be zapped with another hydro rate increase.

By the end of next year, Ontario household power rates will be the highest in North America, except for Prince Edward Island. Ontario rates will continue skyward, even as they level off elsewhere. Businesses and industry will be hit by nearly \$12 billion in added costs. That means more lost jobs.

While a select few energy corporations feast on this government's seemingly endless supply of subsidies, everyone else is left to pay the bill, and they will pay. All of us will pay.

For my constituents in Stratford, today represents a double whammy. They'll be hit not only by the hydro hike but also by this government's mandatory so-called smart meters. Smart meters should be optional and not mandatory. In my recent newsletter survey, many of my constituents sent a clear message: They responded with their views that reducing energy costs should be the government's number one priority, but the McGuinty government's priority is just the opposite. Their priority is to make energy even more expensive. Their energy policies are causing hardship, unemployment, debt and decline. In Perth—Wellington and across the province, that will be the legacy of this government.

It's time we returned reliable, affordable energy to its rightful place. It's time we made it—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I rise today on a solemn occasion. Workers at OLG slots around Ontario—many of them have lost their jobs as of yesterday. Yesterday was the last day of operations for three OLG slot facilities in Windsor, Sarnia and Fort Erie, which were closed abruptly and without any community consultation by Liberal government announcement.

This government did not care to consult with the hundreds of workers who lost their jobs in the Windsor area as a result of these closures. It also didn't care about the horse racing industry and the consequences that cutting revenue-sharing would have on the industry itself, horse farms and all those who provide services in rural communities.

In addition to the 217 jobs lost at Windsor Raceway, there are 1,000 jobs at risk in the area. On top of these closures, 6,000 direct jobs and almost 60,000 related jobs are at stake with the end of revenue-sharing for horse racing, yet the government did not take these numbers into consideration when it was looking for quick fixes to their budget problems.

This short-sighted move has dealt another massive blow to the already hard-hit Windsor area and rural Ontario. The closure, under the guise of the modernization of gaming in Ontario, is a slap in the face to those tracks and associations that were not consulted at all when this new plan was devised but who are the ones that have to suffer because of it. It is also a perfect example of the out-of-touch and arrogant politics this government has used when dealing with rural Ontario.

Today, we're thinking of those workers and offer our entire energy towards finding a solution to get them back to work.

NURSES

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: I rise today to recognize the contribution and dedication that registered practical nurses make in Ontario each and every day. With us today for their Queen's Park day are RPNs who are members of the Service Employees International Union, Local 1—sitting in the members' gallery opposite. This group represents more than 50,000 health care workers in Ontario and provides a strong voice for RPNs in the province. I was very pleased to sponsor their event here, held today at Queen's Park.

It goes without saying that RPNs represent the front line of our health care delivery: hard-working, dedicated members of our health care system who play a vital role in improving patient health and ensuring the efficient delivery of health services in Ontario.

I've had the pleasure to get to know many of the RPNs today, as well as those from Lakeridge Health Corp.; Rouge Valley Health System, Ajax and Pickering site and Centenary site; and the Scarborough Hospital.

I encourage all members to meet with their registered practical nurses from their ridings or regions today. It's

an excellent opportunity to engage in important discussions about how we can continue to work together to strengthen health care in Ontario.

BARB KLAGES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I rise today to recognize Barb Klages of Elmwood, who was recently named the winner of the prestigious Tommy Cooper Award for 2012.

Tommy Cooper was the Grey county agricultural representative from 1920 to 1959, and he dedicated his life to agriculture. He played a major role in shaping the agricultural industry in Grey-Bruce. This annual award recognizes the person who has made an outstanding contribution to farm and rural life in the region.

Barb Klages was nominated by the Bruce County Federation of Agriculture for ongoing leadership in a campaign to ensure the viability of small abattoirs and meat plants while maintaining safe food. Her 25-year dedication to the Malcolm Women's Institute in Walkerton and other notable achievements are cited in her nomination.

After learning of the plight of local abattoirs in early 2010, Barb rallied support from provincial and national farm organizations and won the adoption of a locally written resolution supporting the cause by the Women's Institute of Ontario provincial board. Barb developed a committee, hosted public meetings, met with government officials, and continues to lobby for appropriate rules for small local abattoirs who cannot afford to meet the burden of the increased red tape created by regulations set out for the large industrial abattoirs.

Barb also has volunteered for 4H and Big Brothers/Big Sisters. In the past, I have nominated deserving individuals for this prestigious award. It's a true honour for Barb. I congratulate her for receiving it, and I thank her for her contributions to the agri-food industry and her ongoing commitment to rural organizations.

MAY DAY

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: About 130 years ago in the Haymarket area in Chicago, some workers went out on strike—it was the first May Day—and they went out on a very principled stand, and that was for the eight-hour workday. I know that I'm preaching to the choir here, because very few of us just work eight hours, and, by the way, very few workers out there just work eight hours, 130 years later.

The reason I cite May Day—because it is May Day today—is that our thoughts are with the students who are—100,000 or more of them in Quebec—out on strike for reasonable tuition. When the workers on May Day went out on strike, it was considered extremely unreasonable to ask for eight hours, and already we're hearing that these students are being unreasonable because all they want is affordable tuition.

We keep in mind that in many countries in Europe, post-secondary tuition is free, so I don't think what they're doing is unreasonable, and neither do many students here on campus, who are burdened with the highest student debt in the country and the highest tuition fees in the country. So we say: Keep it non-violent—we would never support or condone violence in the New Democratic Party—but here's to celebrating May Day, both in the Occupy movement and in the students in Quebec, fighting still for very reasonable rights.

DOCTORS' DAY IN ONTARIO

Mr. Reza Moridi: Today is Doctors' Day in Ontario. In 2011, I introduced a motion that was passed unanimously in this House to recognize May 1 as Doctors' Day in Ontario. The motion recognizes the many contributions that doctors make to the health and well-being of all Ontarians. Physicians are an integral component of Ontario's health care system. Every day, Ontario's doctors treat over 400,000 patients.

Thanks to the McGuinty government's strategic investments, Ontario's doctors have helped more than 2.1 million people who previously didn't have access to a family doctor. There are over 3,400 more physicians practising in Ontario since 2003, more medical school spaces, and more physicians are choosing to become family doctors.

As a result of our expansion in medical school capacity and training positions for foreign-trained doctors, the number of doctors graduating and ready to enter practice each year is expected to double between 2003 and 2013. It goes without saying that without the remarkable work that doctors have been doing in Ontario, we wouldn't be enjoying the amazing quality of life we have in this province. I would like to take this opportunity to thank our doctors for the tremendous work they do for us every day in this province.

1510

LABOUR LEGISLATION

Mr. Randy Hillier: In the presence of water and oxygen, iron becomes rust. In the presence of restrictive labour policies and monopolies, a robust manufacturing economy can soon become a rust belt.

Since 2003, Liberal Ontario has embraced restrictive labour legislation such as the College of Trades, card-based certifications and expanded mandatory WSIB premiums, all at the behest of the unions that put them in power. And real per capita GDP growth and the productive capacity of Ontario workers has increased by a paltry 0.86%.

In those same nine years, over 300,000 manufacturing jobs have left Ontario, many going to jurisdictions like Alberta and US states. It's no coincidence that these states and provinces that are growing have less restrictive labour legislation and more choice for workers. Unlike in Ontario, workers in these jurisdictions have the right to

choose what union they want to be part of or whether to be a member at all. According to the US Bureau of Labour Statistics, job growth in right-to-work states is double that of the restricted states.

We can stand by and do nothing as our economy and jobs rust away or take action. That is why we will be tabling legislation today to bring workers' choice to Ontario in an act to amend the Labour Relations Act, 1995, to protect the rights of employees in collective bargaining and the financial interests of members of trade unions.

JEWISH HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Mike Colle: May marks the first-ever proclamation of Jewish Heritage Month in Ontario. Mr. Speaker, as you know, there was unanimous consent in this House to support a bill that would proclaim May as Jewish Heritage Month in Ontario. With the support of my colleague from Parkdale–High Park and my colleague from Thornhill, we were able to enact Jewish Heritage Month.

Now would be an opportunity for all of us across Ontario, from Peterborough to South Porcupine, from Brantford all the way to Brockville, to ensure that we recognize the historical contributions made by Ontarians of Jewish heritage to the music, the culture, the history and the entrepreneurship of this great province.

I think it's a wonderful opportunity to recognize and acknowledge and also to teach our young people about the important contributions our Ontarians of Jewish heritage made to the building of this province. They fought in both wars. They built much of this great province with their bare hands. They were very compassionate in fighting for civil rights, for judicial rights, for human rights and civil rights in this province.

I hope we all take time to mark Jewish Heritage Month this month. I know that next Monday we are going to mark it at Rabbi Yossi's shul at Beth Torah in my riding. We're going to have some good kosher food, some kishka; we're going to have some wonderful kosher wine. We're going to also have some music and we're also going to have some fellowship. So please celebrate Jewish Heritage Month.

ENERGY RATES

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Today the people and businesses of Ontario are being hit with another hydro increase: 3.3% for customers on time-of-use pricing and 5.1% for customers on tiered pricing. Today's increase means hydro prices in Ontario have now doubled since the McGuinty government took office. We all know the cause: Dalton McGuinty's expensive green energy experiments. The government simply can't continue to sign 20-year contracts to buy power at 80 cents or even 50 cents a kilowatt hour without forcing up the cost of hydro for everyone.

We support green energy but it must be competitive and affordable. We also know hydro increases impact jobs. Businesses looking to invest are going to look for a

cheaper jurisdiction, and too many of our businesses are leaving and taking their jobs with them.

Two years ago, in response to my Oxford business survey, 95% of businesses said hydro prices were having an impact on their company. Since that time, prices have continued to spiral.

Last year, the government released that rates are expected to increase 46% by 2015, and already there is evidence that this estimate may be low.

Mr. Speaker, I hear from seniors who are worried that they won't be able to stay in their homes and from families who dread receiving their bills because they don't know how they're going to make ends meet. And today, the cost of hydro goes up again.

It's clear these hydro increases are a direct result of the McGuinty government's policies and Ontario families have had enough.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Mr. David Oraziatti: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on General Government and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended: Bill 8, An Act respecting Ontario One Call Ltd., the title of which is amended to read "An Act respecting an underground infrastructure notification system for Ontario."

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received? Agreed? Agreed. Therefore, the bill shall be ordered for third reading.

Report adopted.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

Mr. Michael Prue: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Estimates on the estimates selected and not selected by the standing committee for consideration.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): Mr. Prue from the Standing Committee on Estimates presents the committee's report as follows:

Pursuant to standing order 60, your committee has selected the estimates 2012-13 of the following ministries and offices for consideration: Ministry of Energy, 15 hours; Ministry of Finance, seven and a half hours; Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, seven and a half hours; Office of Francophone Affairs, seven and a half hours; Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, seven and a half hours; Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, 15 hours; Ministry of Northern Development and Mines,

seven and a half hours; Ministry of Infrastructure, seven and a half hours; Ministry of the Attorney General, seven and a half hours; Ministry of the Environment, seven and a half hours.

Pursuant to standing order 61(a), the estimates 2012-20—

Interjection: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dispense.

Pursuant to standing order 61(b), the report of the committee is deemed to be received and the estimates of the ministries and the offices named therein as not being selected for consideration by the committee are deemed to be concurred in.

Report deemed received.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

DEFENDING EMPLOYEES' RIGHTS ACT (COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AND FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE BY TRADE UNIONS), 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LA DÉFENSE DES DROITS DES EMPLOYÉS (NÉGOCIATION COLLECTIVE ET DIVULGATION

DES RENSEIGNEMENTS FINANCIERS PAR LES SYNDICATS)

Mr. Hillier moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 78, An Act to amend the Labour Relations Act, 1995 to protect the rights of employees in collective bargaining and the financial interests of members of trade unions / *Projet de loi 78, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur les relations de travail pour protéger les droits des employés à la négociation collective et les intérêts financiers des membres des syndicats.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Randy Hillier: From the explanatory note: This bill amends the Labour Relations Act, 1995. An employee in a bargaining unit where there is a collective agreement between the employer and a trade union is not required to be a member of the union. An employee who is not a member of the trade union is not affected by the collective agreement.

The bill limits regular union dues of a member of a trade union to dues that relate to collective bargaining and no other purpose, unless the member specifically authorizes the union to include amounts for such other purposes.

A provision in a collective agreement between an employer and a trade union is void if it requires any employee in the bargaining unit affected by the agree-

ment to pay the union any amount in excess of the employee's regular union dues.

The trade union is prohibited from requesting the employer to deduct from the wages of any employee who is a member of the union any amount in excess of the employee's regular union dues. The parties to a collective agreement are allowed to terminate the agreement on consent.

The bill requires a trade union that is party to a collective agreement to file a yearly statement with the minister setting out the dues that are payable to it under the agreement and particulars of its expenses incurred during the year, with a breakdown given of expenses of \$5,000 or more. The minister is required to post the statement on the ministry's website on the Internet, and the trade union is required to make a copy of the statement available to its members upon request.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

The member for Essex on introduction of bills.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you, Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce what I would explain as an antidote to the previous bill that was just introduced.

LABOUR RELATIONS AMENDMENT ACT (EQUAL RIGHTS FOR EMPLOYEES IN ONTARIO), 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES RELATIONS DE TRAVAIL (ÉGALITÉ DES DROITS POUR LES EMPLOYÉS DE L'ONTARIO)

Mr. Natyshak moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 79, An Act to amend the Labour Relations Act, 1995 to provide an equal right for trade unions to have access to certification processes and to enact other measures with respect to employee rights / *Projet de loi 79, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur les relations de travail pour accorder aux syndicats un droit égal d'accès aux processus d'accréditation et pour édicter d'autres mesures concernant les droits des employés.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I will read from the explanatory note, which is obviously convention. I didn't know that until yesterday.

The bill amends the Labour Relations Act, 1995. Major features of the bill include the following: The act currently provides that trade unions in the construction industry may elect to have applications for certification dealt with without a vote. The act is amended to extend this option to all trade unions.

The act is amended to provide that employers shall not discharge or discipline employees without just cause in certain circumstances.

Section 80 of the act currently governs reinstatement of employees when a lawful strike occurs. The bill amends the reinstatement provisions.

The act is amended to require the minister to prepare and publish a poster providing information about labour relations in Ontario. Employers are required to post the poster in conspicuous places within the workplace.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It might be educational to know—and we learn something new every day—that in the standing orders, it says, in a line for decorum, under number 20—not 23; under 20—no one is to heckle anyone when a member stands. I looked that up.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Why did I do that?

EQUAL VOICE

À VOIX ÉGALES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of the Environment on a point of order.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To your previous reference, if I may make reference to that, that has been superseded by convention in the Legislature in recent years, I think.

I believe we have unanimous consent for each party to speak for up to five minutes on the issue of greater representation of women in the provincial Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of the Environment has sought unanimous consent for up to five minutes to speak on this issue. Do we all agree? Agreed.

Minister of Education.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Thank you very much, Speaker. It's a pleasure to speak in support of Equal Voice today, who are here at Queen's Park.

Equal Voice is a non-partisan organization dedicated to electing more women at all levels of political office in Canada. They see the underrepresentation of women in our Parliament and in our Legislatures as a fundamental deficit in Canada's democratic institutions. Unfortunately, Canada is falling behind in women's representation. Canada has fewer women in Parliament than most of Europe and many other countries in the world.

Il nous faut plus de femmes dans la vie publique, et il nous faut travailler tous ensemble pour y parvenir.

That's why we need more women in public life and we need to work together to bring that about. We have the tools to do it. In fact, in 2008, the United Nations released a report which asserted that, "Political party reform to ensure internal democratization improves women's chances of competing for public office."

The work of Equal Voice is so important because women still encounter barriers when seeking elected office. There are often media imbalances in the treatment

of women politicians and sometimes there's a failure of political parties to encourage women candidates, to name just a few of those barriers. But we know that political will and commitment from party leaders does make a difference and can make a difference.

In 2006, Equal Voice asked all parties in this Legislature to nominate more women candidates in Ontario. They did, and the result was a 7% increase in the number of women elected in just one election cycle. Speaker, we can make a difference. In this regard, that's why I'm so proud of the leadership of our Premier. During the last provincial election, Ontario Liberals nominated a record 42 women candidates, more than any other party and more than any other time in the history of our party.

We need more women elected because women make a difference for our province. They've played key roles in introducing initiatives that benefit all women in the province, initiatives such as the Ontario child benefit, full-day kindergarten and the poverty reduction strategy. Women have helped lead social assistance reform, drug reform, the family caregiver leave, and the Accepting Schools Act, which addresses the issue of gender-based bullying.

Women have worked on vital investments in child care, the domestic violence action plan, the sexual violence action plan and so much more. But these initiatives aren't just good for women; they're good for our province. They make it better, stronger, safer, fairer and more caring for each and every Ontarian.

But as the Premier said last year, Agnes Macphail didn't get elected solely to fight for women's issues. She lobbied for progress for farmers, prisoners and seniors. She stood up for women, yes, but she stood up for everyone else as well, and so too do the women in this Legislature.

Each woman in this Legislature has her own story about how and why she made the decision to enter into public service. Perhaps she had a mentor. Perhaps she was given an encouraging tap on the shoulder. Perhaps her convictions on an issue made her put up her hand. Or maybe she was driven by the resolve of Agnes Macphail, who once said, "I want for myself what I want for other women: absolute equality."

Let's resolve today to carry on her good work and support Equal Voice by attracting more women to public life so that the laws we make here and the programs and services we provide are fully representative of who we are as a province and as a society. We have so many talented women in Ontario doing fantastic things. They're leaders, and we need more of them right here in our Legislature. We need to reach out to them with a tap on the shoulder or an encouraging word.

So thank you to Equal Voice for speaking up to ensure we all take collective action to ensure a future with more women in public life.

Merci, À voix égales, pour votre travail en assurant qu'il y a plus de femmes dans la vie publique.

Thank you for reminding us that this issue is still alive and needs political leadership in order to be accomplished. We need Equal Voice to continue to do the work that they're doing every day because we need more women's voices and life stories reflected here in the Ontario Legislature every day.

As Equal Voice says, "Be her or support her." I'm certain that is something that each and every one of us can do.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to participate today on behalf of Tim Hudak and the PC caucus in marking the 10th anniversary of Equal Voice, promoting the election of more women to all levels of government.

This, as was stated by the minister, is a non-partisan, non-government organization that exists for the sole purpose of promoting the election of more women in Canadian politics.

When you look at the list of Equal Voices' advisory board members, it's a veritable who's who of some of the most admired women in Canadian politics in the last 25 years: Kim Campbell, Pat Carney, Sheila Copps, Janet Ecker, Judy Erola, Barbara Hall, Alexa McDonough, Audrey McLaughlin, Lyn McLeod, Anita Neville, Flora MacDonald, Lucie Pépin and Nancy Ruth.

In January 2001, the late Christina McCall invited Libby Burnham and Rosemary Speirs to a meeting to try and breathe new life into the attempt to get more women elected. On a sunny Sunday afternoon on May 6, 2001, a reception was held for the people interested in helping at Donna Dasko's house. I was fortunate enough to have been invited there by Libby Burnham.

Since that meeting I have run and won in three general elections, becoming the first woman elected from my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, and now stand today as the PC critic for women's issues. It's my opportunity to say happy anniversary to Equal Voice and to thank them for their mentorship towards me.

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Today, Equal Voice has active chapters across Canada. From 1919, when women in Canada got the vote, to Agnes Macphail serving as the first member of Parliament and the first Ontario MPP, through to the appointment of Ellen Fairclough in 1957 as Canada's first woman cabinet minister, the progress of women in politics has been steady. In the intervening 55 years, women have made great political progress in Ontario and across the country, with many women serving as Premiers or as senior government ministers and opposition leaders.

In addition to the government of Canada having the highest percentage of women in cabinet in Canadian history, four women serve as Premiers: Eva Aariak in Nunavut, Alison Redford in Alberta, Christy Clark in British Columbia and Kathy Dunderdale in Newfoundland. For the first time in history, we can say that there are women Premiers from coast to coast to coast.

As many of you know, I came from a political background, with my father being the member of Parliament from 1965 until 1993. So going from a registered nurse into the political field—one of the most trusted professions to one that maybe isn't so trusted—was a little bit of a different campaign. You heard the quiet mutterings on the doorsteps that some people would not vote for me because I was a woman, but you did get the other part that would vote for me because I was a woman. But I think a lot of those traditional prejudices facing women in politics, for the most part, have faded into the background, and I hope that they have done that. There is a much greater likelihood today of candidates being judged on their individual merits and the policies and leadership of their party rather than gender, and I'm very happy to see that.

Last fall, I was very pleased to be part of the largest group of female candidates in the history of the Ontario PC Party. It is a good moment. Unfortunately, in the Legislature here, we are 28% women in the Legislature. So there's more work to be done, considering we represent just over 50% of the population. On the average, in Canada as a whole, it's only 25% that we account for in the municipal councils, provincial Legislatures and the House of Commons.

Over the past 10 years, Equal Voice has performed a valuable role in promoting this agenda through its work with all political parties, its ongoing outreach with young women and encouragement of women to run for public office. I was a mentor for a young woman who went to BC to run for the Green Party, so it is a truly non-partisan group that does mentor.

But good organizations never lose sight of their goals. It's important to take time to celebrate its successes. That was certainly the case on April 25, when the leader of the third party, Andrea Horwath, was presented with Equal Voice's 2012 EVE Award, and I'd like to take the opportunity to offer my congratulations to her.

"Women in politics" certainly doesn't have the exotic ring that it once did, nor does it instill the fear in the hearts of men that it once did. However, as I said earlier, there is still work to be done in promoting the election of more women to positions in all levels of government. I know that Equal Voice has that ongoing commitment here, and we as MPPs, and even to the young female pages who are with us today, should be mentors to them and to all women so that they are encouraged that they can enter all levels of the political field.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and happy anniversary to Equal Voice.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Parkdale-High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much to the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock for acknowledging that it was, in fact, our leader, Andrea Horwath, who won the EVE Award just this last week from Equal Voice. Of course, that gives me even more of an added pleasure in standing

up to commemorate this 10th anniversary of this amazing organization.

I also want to acknowledge their support in the Girls Government initiative that has now become, I think, a joint ownership of this entire assembly. It was started in Parkdale-High Park—I'm very, very proud of that—where we get girls in grade 8 to get together and to come here for a tour, to go to Ottawa for a tour, to pick a topic and to debate that topic, to come here for a press conference—to really experience what it is to be a woman in political life.

At our very first dinner that was hosted, I must say—and thank you for this, Mr. Speaker—by the Speaker, of all women from all parties, in the dining room, there was a Liberal member from Guelph who stood up and said this should be one of our first initiatives. So it's truly non-partisan, truly in the spirit of Equal Voice, truly something we can do for girls coming up through the system.

I want to say I'm also proud that federally we have 40% of our caucus—it's a very large caucus, at that—that is female, and here 40% of our caucus is female. Again, we in the New Democratic Party are extremely proud of that. But, as has been acknowledged, we have a long, long, long way to go.

Whenever I talk about women's issues, I always like to mention the fact that I am the first woman in my family to be considered under law a human person. People automatically think that maybe my mother or grandmother came from somewhere else, some other country, but no, they didn't; they came from here. It was in 1929 that we became considered human persons. Before then, we were considered the property of our husbands or our fathers, so any member here who's female whose mother was born before 1929, you are the first generation of human persons. We have come a long way.

I remember "Help wanted: female. Help wanted: male." We're still struggling. We're still struggling with women making 71 cents to every dollar that men make. We're still struggling in this province with inadequate child care. In Quebec, they've proven a dollar into child care gets \$1.05 back in investment in the province. We're still struggling for that here.

These are the measures of women's equality and, of course, the more equal women are and the more equal access they have, the more they'll run for political office, the more will be elected and then, of course, the more we can do on women's issues.

But certainly we've made some progress here, so I just want to give a shout-out to all those amazing women at Equal Voice. I want to thank the Toronto Star and their editorial board for featuring Girls Government last week.

I want to thank Equal Voice for saying they're committed to making Girls Government not only a provincial initiative, not only one taken up—and I should mention their names—by the member from Etobicoke Centre and by the former member from Kitchener-Waterloo—the first two members of the two other parties who started

Girls Government in their own ridings. Thank you. By the way—and I see men clapping—you don't have to be a woman to do it. You can be a man and start Girls Government, and talk to me after about how you do that. We've got the template. But want I thank them for starting.

I want to thank Equal Voice and I want to thank them in particular for saying they want to make this program national. I look forward to working on that. I look forward to spreading that program around this Legislature.

I look forward to all this group of girls, who, in the words of one we met with on our Ottawa trip, Niki Ashton—twice elected, ran for leader of the party, only 30 years old and she looks like she is 19, if you've seen her. The girls, when they met with her, their summary of the meeting—I said, "What did you think? Here's a young woman who has been elected twice and ran for the leadership of her party and she's only 30 years old. What do you think?" And one of them said, "She's really cool," but more importantly, she said, "It's a really cool job." And I think we can all attest, we women here, that it's a really cool job, Mr. Speaker, and more girls need to be exposed to it. More women need to run; more women need to get elected. We're just thankful that Equal Voice has put the push on to do all of the above.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all the members for their statements.

PETITIONS

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Robert Bailey: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas residents of Ontario want a moratorium on all further industrial wind turbine development until a third party health and environmental study has been completed; and

"Whereas people in Ontario living within close proximity to industrial wind turbines have reported negative health effects; we need to study the physical, social, economic and environmental impacts of wind turbines; and

"Whereas Ontario's largest farm organization, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, and the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario have called for a suspension of industrial wind turbine development until the serious shortcomings can be addressed, and the Auditor General confirmed wind farms were created in haste and with no planning; and

"Whereas there have been no third party health and environmental studies done on industrial wind turbines, and the Auditor General confirmed there was no real plan for green energy in Ontario and wind farms were constructed in haste;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government support Huron–Bruce MPP Lisa Thompson's private member's motion which calls for a moratorium on all industrial wind turbine development until a third party health and environmental study has been completed."

I agree with the petition, will affix my name and send it down with Carley.

RADIATION SAFETY

Ms. Helena Jaczek: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas subsection 6(2)8 of the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act identifies dental hygienists as persons deemed to be qualified to operate an X-ray machine; and 1540

"Whereas dental hygienists in independent practice need to be able to prescribe X-rays and to be designated as radiation protection officers in order to provide their clients with safe and convenient access to a medically necessary procedure, as is already the case in many comparable jurisdictions;

"We, the dental hygienists in independent practice, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To express support for the motion filed on April 17, 2012, by the member from Richmond Hill that asks the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to establish a committee consisting of experts to review the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act (1990) and its regulations and make recommendations on how to modernize this act and bring it to 21st century standards, so that it becomes responsive to the safety of patients and the public and to include all forms of radiation that are currently used in the health care sector for diagnostic and therapeutic purposes."

I agree with this petition, will affix my signature to it and send it to the table with page Ranbir.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Ms. Sylvia Jones: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas a report from Ontario's Auditor General on the province's air ambulance service, Ornge, found a web of questionable financial deals where tens of millions of taxpayers' dollars have been wasted and public safety compromised;

"Whereas Ornge officials created a 'mini-conglomerate' of private entities that enriched former senior officers and left taxpayers on the hook for \$300 million in debt;

"Whereas government funding for Ornge climbed 20% to \$700 million, while the number of patients it airlifted actually declined;

"Whereas a subsidiary of Ornge bought the head office building in Mississauga for just over \$15 million and then leased it back to Ornge at a rate 40% higher than fair market rent;

"Whereas the Liberal Minister of Health completely failed in her duty to provide proper oversight of Ornge;

"Whereas this latest scandal follows the eHealth boondoggle where \$2 billion in health dollars have been wasted;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government of Ontario immediately appoint a special all-party select committee to investigate the scandals surrounding Ornge."

I fully support this petition and affix my name to it and give it to page Brady to give to the table.

TOURISM

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I have a petition which reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas tourism is a vital contributor to the economy of northwestern Ontario, bringing hundreds of millions of dollars into the province's economy from other provinces and the United States, unlike other regions in the province whose target demographic is people who already reside in Ontario;

"Whereas northwestern Ontario's tourist economy has been under attack by government policies such as the cancellation of the spring bear hunt, the harmonized sales tax (HST), the strong Canadian dollar and difficulties passing through the Canada/United States border; and

"Whereas studies have shown that tourism in the northwest nets significantly more money per stay than other regions of the province, in part due to visitors frequenting historical sites, parks and roadside attractions that they learn about through travel information centres;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"To keep the travel information centres in Fort Frances, Kenora and Rainy River open permanently to ensure that northwestern Ontario maximizes the benefit of our tourist economy."

I proudly support this and will ask page Shaumik to deliver this.

RADIATION SAFETY

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas subsection 6(2)8 of the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act identifies dental hygienists as persons deemed to be qualified to operate an X-ray machine; and

"Whereas dental hygienists need to be able to prescribe X-rays and to be designated as radiation protection officers in order to provide their patients/clients with safe and convenient access to a medically necessary procedure, as is already the case in many comparable jurisdictions;

"We, the dental hygienists working in Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To express support for the motion filed on April 17, 2012, by the member from Richmond Hill that asks the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to establish a committee consisting of experts to review the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act (1990) and its regulations and make recommendations on how to modernize this act and bring it to 21st century standards, so that it becomes responsive to the safety of patients/clients and the public and to include all forms of radiation that are currently used in the health care sector for diagnostic and therapeutic purposes."

I support this petition. I will affix my signature to it and I will ask page Jenny to bring to the clerks' table.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. John O'Toole: "Whereas Solray Energy Corp. has given notice of its proposal for a class 3 solar power facility known as Epsom Solar Farm to be located in the township of Scugog; and

"Whereas the site is on prime agricultural land that has been in production for many generations; and

"Whereas we consider productive farmland to be of vital importance to farm and rural communities by providing healthy, locally grown food and ensuring the sustainability of Canada's food supply; and

"Whereas class 1 to 5 farmland should be protected from the current proposal and similar projects that may be considered in the future; and

"Whereas other sites of less value to agriculture are better locations for solar power developments;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature not to allow large, industrial wind or solar farms on prime agricultural land, and we further express our support for giving local communities, through their elected municipal councils, the power to control and approve large-scale renewable energy developments."

I'm pleased to sign and support this and present it to Vincent, one of the pages here.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition from Scarborough—Agincourt addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas creating a safe and positive learning environment is an essential part of helping students succeed in school;

"Whereas bullying, homophobia and gender-based violence are unacceptable;

"Whereas we need to do more than just tell bullied kids it gets better—we need to work together to make it better now;

"Whereas the Accepting Schools Act would, if passed, help to end bullying in our schools;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the elected members of all parties help make our schools safer and more inclusive by supporting the Accepting Schools Act."

I certainly support this petition. I will affix my signature and send it through page Brady.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. Todd Smith: This is about a dangerous stretch of highway at the north end of Belleville. After many close calls there, unfortunately two young women were killed in Corbyville just before Christmas, prompting this petition on behalf of hundreds of residents in the area. I'm happy to present it today.

To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there is an expressed concern among citizens of Thurlow ward in the city of Belleville that the intersection of Highway 37 and Wiser Road is a safety hazard;

"We, the undersigned, petition ... the Ontario Legislative Assembly as follows:

"That ... the Ontario Legislative Assembly ... contact the Ministry of Transportation on our behalf to have a study and report completed as to safety features that should be added to the intersection, and that those recommendations be then acted upon."

I'm happy to sign this and send it to the table with Shaumik.

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Alzheimer's disease is a degenerative brain disease that causes thinking and memory impairment. Alzheimer's disease is progressive, worsens over time, and will eventually lead to death;

"Whereas there are an estimated 181,000 Ontarians diagnosed with Alzheimer's and related dementia today, and that number is set to increase by 40% in the next 10 years;

"Whereas Alzheimer's disease creates social, emotional and economic burdens on the family and friends of those suffering with the disease;

"Whereas the total economic burden of dementia in Ontario is expected to increase by more than \$770 million per year through to 2020;

"We, the undersigned"—and this petition comes from London and St. Thomas—"call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to establish an Alzheimer's advisory council to advise the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on matters pertaining to strategy respecting research, treatment and the prevention of Alzheimer's and other related dementia."

I will sign my name.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I bring a petition from the Wikwemikong Unceded Indian Reserve. The 1,146 signatures say here:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas industrial wind turbine development on the sacred land of Mnido Mnis (Manitoulin Island) has disrupted our peaceful life, dividing First Nation and non-First Nation communities and families; and

"Whereas there is growing opposition to Northland Power's McLean's Mountain industrial wind turbine project; and

"Whereas it would be a very sad chapter in our history if we stand by and let the pursuit of money destroy this beautiful land; and

"Whereas the Manitoulin Coalition for Safe Energy Alternatives, the Wikwemikong Unceded First Nation elders, community members and youth, the North Channel Preservation Society and others stand together to preserve and protect the healthy environment along with traditional culture and heritage values which we cherish so greatly;

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"We, the undersigned, hereby oppose industrial wind farm development on Mnido Mnis (Manitoulin Island)."

I agree and sign my name.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Phil McNeely: I have a petition from the people of Avalon Public School in my riding of Ottawa-Orléans.

"To the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas the current enrolment of Avalon Public School is 687 students;

"Whereas the student capacity of the school is 495 students, as determined by the Ministry of Education's own occupancy formula;

"Whereas the issue of overcrowding and lack of space makes it impossible for Avalon Public School to offer full-day kindergarten until the overcrowding issue is addressed;

"Whereas Avalon Public School is located in a high-growth community;

"Whereas the enrolment at Avalon Public School is expected to continue rising at a rate of 10% to 15% a year for the foreseeable future;

"Whereas the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board has made building a new school in Avalon a top capital priority;

"We, the undersigned, call on the province of Ontario and Ministry of Education to provide the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board with the necessary funding to build an additional school in Avalon, to open no later than September 2014."

I support this petition and send it forward with Manak.

GO TRANSIT

Ms. Laurie Scott: "To the Premier and Legislature of the province of Ontario:

"The city of Kawartha Lakes is the chosen home of the largest per capita population of senior citizens in the province of Ontario; and

"There is an inability to attract a sufficient number of primary caregivers to service this population, causing many to travel to the greater Toronto area to seek medical attention; and

"The city of Kawartha Lakes is the proud home of Sir Sandford Fleming College (Frost campus), which attracts students from across the province who are unable to access the provincial rail link in the city of Oshawa; and

"Students from the city of Kawartha Lakes travel across this province to various institutions of higher learning and are unable to access transportation from the city of Oshawa to the city of Kawartha Lakes (town of Lindsay); and

"A large number of citizens of the city of Kawartha Lakes are required to travel daily to the greater Toronto area to avail themselves of employment opportunities that are not available locally; and

"The province of Ontario has a stated policy to improve air quality through the reduction of traffic on provincial highways by the provision of mass transit;

"We, the undersigned citizens of the city of Kawartha Lakes, petition the Ontario government to provide, as soon as possible, a direct GO Transit link from the town of Lindsay, in the said city of Kawartha Lakes, to the city of Oshawa; and

"We ask ... Laurie Scott, MPP for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, to carry this petition on our behalf to the provincial Legislature."

I want to thank Fred Barnes for gathering over 1,000 names on this petition, and I apply my signature.

RADIATION SAFETY

Mr. Reza Moridi: I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly:

"Whereas subsection 6(2)8 of the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act identifies dental hygienists as persons deemed to be qualified to operate an X-ray machine; and

"Whereas dental hygienists in independent practice need to be able to prescribe X-rays and to be designated as radiation protection officers in order to provide their clients with safe and convenient access to a medically necessary procedure, as is already the case in many comparable jurisdictions;

"We, the dental hygienists in independent practice, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To express support for the motion filed on April 17, 2012, by the member from Richmond Hill that asks the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to establish a committee consisting of experts to review the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act (1990) and its regulations and make recommendations on how to modernize this act

and bring it to 21st century standards, so that it becomes responsive to the safety of patients and the public and to include all forms of radiation that are currently used in the health care sector for diagnostic and therapeutic purposes.”

I fully agree with this petition, I sign it and pass it on to page Sabrina to deliver it to the table.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ACCEPTING SCHOOLS ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 POUR DES ÉCOLES TOLÉRANTES

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 26, 2012, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 13, An Act to amend the Education Act with respect to bullying and other matters / Projet de loi 13, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation en ce qui a trait à l'intimidation et à d'autres questions.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Oshawa, in his last remarks on Bill 13, was committed, passionate and very, very exceptional in terms of his putting two or three points on the table that I think were quite new to the debate. In fact, he pointed out, as I recall, a section that exists in the Education Act today that would have permitted the Minister of Education—you'll see I'm not false, to demonstrate that I actually listen when people speak; the section, I believe, was 306 in the bill, that would have allowed the Minister of Education today to deal with bullying.

Now, from the evidence I have from both my daughter-in-law, who is a teacher, as well as my wife, who was a teacher and now a school trustee, the issue of bullying today in schools is a problem. We all agree with that. The intent of Bill 14 of the former member from Kitchener-Waterloo—now the chair of the WSIB—was clearly not to prioritize bullying but to deal with all forms of bullying, because all of us agree it's completely inappropriate.

Now, I think Lisa MacLeod, our critic, has tried relentlessly to get some kind of consensus developed so that we could put Bill 13 and Bill 14 into committee. Let's not polarize these things. Let's try and move forward and try to find consensus; consensus, I think, would put less emphasis on certain aspects of Bill 13.

I would only say this: the member from Oshawa—I believe that if you review his remarks, and I expect out of respect that people on the other side would comment on that—was trying to make the argument in the case very clearly that under the Education Act today, there is a provision under section 306 that would allow the minister to do that.

Let's get on with it. Let's move forward together under the leadership of Tim Hudak and make Ontario a better place for all of our students.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, as you are well aware, and as I imagine many are well aware, we have been very frustrated watching this process between the government and the opposition on anti-bullying. We believe that our children deserve far better. We want action on bullying. We need co-operation between these two parties to actually make things go forward. Whatever happens in this House still has to be sorted out in committee. If we don't forge co-operation, the frustration we've had in debates here will be reflected in frustration in committee.

To the Conservatives, I say: Elizabeth Witmer has gone; her bill has died. One of you—I assume Lisa MacLeod—should bring forward that bill post-haste.

To the Liberals, I say: Bill 14 and Bill 13 should both be adopted on second reading and go to committee so that we can hear both of them, so the public can come and depute, and we can resolve this.

Speaker, both parties have gone around in circles on this. We are prepared to work with both parties to get the bills into committee, to talk and to come up with a solution: no games, no use of a hammer on the Legislature; simply a movement into committee.

The Liberals have been saying that the bells are related to the anti-bullying, but even in the press conference given by Laurel Broten, she brought in a wide range of other issues. I would say that it is a question of a fight over Omge. I say to the Conservatives: It's time to bring back your bill, it's time to put both bills into committee, time to hear from the people of Ontario and move forward on this.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The Minister of the Environment.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I have a lot of time for the member for Oshawa, who I think is very thoughtful in the remarks that he brings to the Legislature and the kind of approach that he brings—I hope he doesn't put this in his next election pamphlet—but I do have a good deal of respect for him, and I thought his speech was particularly compelling on this issue.

I know I'm disappointed, as he may be privately—I can't say he is publicly—that instead of seeing the kind of debate that is helpful in a bill of this kind, we've seen bell ringing taking place.

For the public who is not aware of what bell ringing is, that is, of course, when the members of the opposition want to disrupt the House—in this case, it's the official opposition, not the New Democratic Party—or put a stick in the spokes of the bicycle; what they do is ring bells. They end up moving adjournment of the debate, and the bell rings for 30 minutes. Then they end up moving adjournment of the House, and what do we have happening then? We have, of course, another 30-minute bell.

1600

I encourage debate with members of the House. Even when I disagree with what they're saying on the other side, I like to hear that debate. We know that the children in our classrooms are counting on having this legislation in place for their return to classrooms in September. We stand by our commitment to incorporate over half of Liz Witmer's bill, which was withdrawn on her resignation, in the Accepting Schools Act, because I thought she made a good effort in this. I congratulate her on her appointment as the head of the workers' safety board. I hope that we can resolve this matter without further bell ringing.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comment?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm pleased to comment. I'll take my cue from the Minister of the Environment, who took substantial licence in his editorializing in here and did not really speak to the statement that my colleague had done the last time the bill was debated.

He has his own version on what's going on in this House, and I think I'd like to clarify that. This is about the ringing of the bells. The minister says that they want to debate. Speaker, the last time that a Liberal member rose in this House to debate Bill 13 was April 4—so, it's almost a month since a Liberal has stood in this House and debated the bill. We have been debating the bill. We have never shied away from debating the bill. We believe that every member in this Legislature should be able to exercise their right to debate this bill, and we're going to do that.

But let me make one thing crystal clear: The reason the bells are ringing in this House is because this government broke its own promise to this Legislature. The Minister of Health stood in her place repeatedly and said, "I will abide by the will of this Legislature." When, in a resolution, this Legislature voted to establish a select committee to look into the scandal at Ornge that has been perpetrated by this government, they broke their promise. This Legislature voted for it. The minister promised she would abide by the will of the Legislature, and broke that promise.

That is why this opposition party—it has nothing to do with Bill 13 or Bill 50 or Bill 16 or 2 or 19 or any other bill. It is about the absolute disrespect for the will of the Legislature displayed by this party on the other side. As long as they want to stand in their place and break promises and brag about it, this party will stand up for the rights of this Legislature to debate any bill and to cause the bells to ring when this party will continue to lie and break its word.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I ask the member to withdraw.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Withdraw, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you.

The member from Oshawa has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the members from Durham, Toronto–Danforth, St. Catharines and Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke speaking in regard to my comments.

A couple of things—and I would mention to the member from St. Catharines: The minister has been around for a number of years, as have a significant number of others. He brought it to my attention that, in years gone by—and I checked Hansard, and guess what?—the bells rang for a week at one particular time. You can't believe that. He may have been privy to it at that time, or part of the entire aspect; I'm not sure. But let's talk about another member, because that's where a lot of it—

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: Is this about Bill 13?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I will get to that, if given the chance. I'm trying to answer the comments that came formerly.

The members of the current government actually spoke in committee for two years to delay that. You want to talk about these things? I'll be happy to bring up the stuff from Hansard that we talked about. Let's talk about the occupation of the Legislature—

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: Is this about Bill 13?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: —but back to Bill 13. There were specific aspects in there that I wanted to emphasize and that was where, in legislation—and this was brought forward by a well-known Canadian, Pierre Elliott Trudeau—where, quite frankly, Madam Speaker, it is stated that any time a single entity is mentioned in the legislation, there is a perception given of a higher order of rights. Essentially, by mentioning any specific entity and excluding others in legislation, there is a perception that there is a hierarchy, or a hierarchy of rights, that is established when these things come forward.

We want to make sure that—

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: Is this about Bill 13?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Absolutely, and if the member was listening or heard the debate, she would know exactly what it was about.

But establishing that is at the cost of others, and that's the concern of other entities that are not listed as well.

My colleague from Durham mentioned section 306, where it specifically stated that bullying was the ability of the principals, whether it was on school or off school, in any way, shape or form to address that issue.

Tuesday last, a week ago today, I had one of the parents come to me and specifically say, "We're concerned. We realize this is taking place and the only thing that's happening in the school board right now is they're moving our child from school to school to school." They're now looking at private school in order to eliminate it.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Ottawa–Orléans.

Mr. Phil McNeely: I just want to correct the record from yesterday's debate. I said "cost hundreds of thousands of dollars per hour." It should have been "per year," as I had in my notes. I may have stated wrongly. It's just about 1510 in the record.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you very much. Further debate?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 13, An Act to amend the Education Act with respect to bullying and other matters. I'm happy to have the opportunity to participate in this debate.

Bullying is a serious issue that is affecting our children, their ability to learn and in some cases impacting every part of their lives. Madam Speaker, we have too much bullying in schools and too many young people starting each day dreading what the bullies will do to them.

I've heard from many constituents who are concerned about bullying—from Norwich township, parents in Tillsonburg and parents in Ingersoll. In some cases, the situation is so intolerable that the parents felt that their only option was to remove their children from the school and do home-schooling.

I've written to the school board and we've tried to work with parents and schools, but clearly we need to do more. We need to give schools and school boards the tools they need to deal effectively with bullying and give children the support they need to feel safe in schools. I think that's something that all three parties would agree on.

This session, two bills were introduced that addressed this problem: Bill 13, which we are debating today, and Bill 14, which was introduced by my colleague the former member from Kitchener–Waterloo. I want to commend her for all her work on this important issue.

Bill 14 was the culmination of two years of work with educators, stakeholders and parents. The bill was intended to raise awareness and prevent bullying to make our schools a safer place for our children to learn. Although Elizabeth Witmer is no longer a member of this Legislature, we can still learn from her work on bullying and we can still look to the bill she introduced for ideas on how to improve Bill 13. This isn't about partisan politics; it's about making sure that we have the best possible legislation to help students who are being bullied.

Madam Speaker, shortly after I was elected, I had a very sad situation in my riding. A young girl was being bullied at school. She was attacked by four bullies who forced her to the ground and burned her hand with a cigarette. The bullies were charged by the law, but they were allowed to go free and to continue to attend the same school. The victim was expected to go back and sit in the same classroom with them, but she was unable to do that.

We worked with the school board to try to find a solution. After much work, we were able to separate them, but it was the victim who had to be moved to another school and it was the victim's parents who then had to drive her each morning to a location where she could catch a bus to go to the other school. We need to ensure that when bullying occurs, it is the bully rather than the victim who is punished.

But more than that, we need to address the cause of bullying to prevent situations like the tragedy where young people feel they can no longer face another day at school. That's why we need to compare the strengths and weaknesses of Bill 13 and former Bill 14 to ensure that we provide the best possible solution for our young people.

Bill 14 was a comprehensive anti-bullying bill that focused on prevention, accountability and awareness. It would have provided students, parents and educators with a strategy to raise awareness and prevent bullying as well as a process to resolve it, collect data and report to the ministry. Unfortunately, Bill 13 does not include these things and therefore does not address the root causes of bullying.

We believe in tackling bullying head on. Unlike the government bill, the bill introduced by the member from Kitchener–Waterloo did so in four critical areas: (1) reporting and investigating bullying, (2) accountability of school officials and boards to the ministry, (3) education and public awareness to prevent bullying, and (4) remedial education for bullies to teach them that bullying is unacceptable.

Bill 14 required anti-bullying lessons to be incorporated into the provincial curriculum from JK to grade 12—again, something that is missing in Bill 13.

Bill 13 limits the focus to a few groups, but that would eliminate many of the young people who need our help. In contrast, the definition in Bill 14 was more thorough and focuses on what constitutes bullying and how it affects the victim.

Just a few months ago, Amanda, a staff member in this building, had a devastating experience when her young cousin took her own life because she was bullied at school. Amanda wants what happened to her cousin to help others. This weekend, she is participating in a walk to support Kids Help Phone, and she is sharing her cousin's story to raise awareness. I want to read what Amanda wrote:

"Chalyce was an incredibly bright, talented, witty and beautiful individual—inside and out. She was in the international baccalaureate program, a community volunteer, a talented singer and photographer, and had the best sense of humour.

"Of all the admirable qualities Chalyce possessed, it was her kindness and sincere concern for others that were her strongest. Chalyce had the ability to make anyone she came in contact feel special and valued.

"On January 13, 2012, Chalyce took her life; she was 17.

"During her visitation and funeral services, our family learned that while Chalyce's own struggle with depression and bullying had turned out to be insurmountable, she had touched the lives of many other youth who were dealing with similar issues.

"More than one person shared with Chalyce's family that Chalyce had 'saved' them from a similar fate."

Madam Speaker, I want to express my sympathies to the family and thank them for sharing that story.

We need to find ways to help young people like Chalyce, but unfortunately, the government's bill would have excluded her. I hope that as we move forward, we can work together to create the strongest, most effective anti-bullying legislation possible.

Again, I want to say how pleased I was to participate in this debate today. I think it is important that we are open to amendments or looking at ways to once again put Bill 14 forward as an option.

I hope that the government really is willing to work with us on this important issue. I'd like to believe that they are. But we have to look at their record. The Minister of Health told us repeatedly in this Legislature that she would support a select committee to investigate Ornge if it was the will of the Legislature. In democracy, the government should listen to the will of the Legislature, and yet they refuse to do so. The majority of members of this Legislature voted to create a select committee of all parties to investigate Ornge, but the government still refuses to move forward with the committee. It is for that reason that I move adjournment of the debate, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Mr. Hardeman has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1613 to 1643.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Members take your seats, please.

Mr. Hardeman has moved adjournment of the debate. All those in favour will please stand and be counted by the clerks.

All those opposed, please stand.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 21; the nays are 35.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I declare the motion lost.

Further debate? Mr. Hardeman.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise again to speak to Bill 13, An Act to amend the Education Act with respect to bullying and other matters.

During this debate, many of the members in this Legislature have shared sad stories of students who were being bullied, and for them, we have a responsibility to get this legislation right. I encourage the government to look at the work that Elizabeth Witmer did and ensure that the bill—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It's kind of loud in here, and we're trying to listen to Mr. Hardeman—

Applause.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I can do without the clapping, thank you.

Please take your seats, and less sidebars, please.

Mr. Hardeman.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: We'd hoped that the bill would encourage the government to look at the work that Elizabeth Witmer did to ensure that the bill this Legislature passes includes the requirement for a prevention plan, puts bullying prevention in the curriculum, broadens the definition of bullying to include all people who are being victimized and includes accountability.

I also encourage them to look at the section on cyber-bullying, which is largely absent from the government's bill. Bullying doesn't always stop when the bell rings and the kids leave the playground. We need to ensure that the legislation recognizes that. Bill 14 would have been my preferred option. I hope that, working together and building on the work done by Elizabeth Witmer, we can create a bill that would truly protect our kids.

I think it's also very important that people can be held accountable for what they say. The Minister of Health said she would obey the will of the House, that if the House voted to have a select committee on Ornge to get to the bottom of the disaster that we have there, she would support that, Mr. Speaker.

With that, I will ask for adjournment of the House until she appoints that committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Mr. Hardeman has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour will say "aye."

Opposed?

I believe the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1646 to 1716.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Members, take your seats.

Mr. Hardeman has moved adjournment of the House. All those in favour, please stand and be counted by the clerks' table.

Those opposed, please stand.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 12; the nays are 41.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The motion fails.

Questions and comments?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I regularly hear—as I heard, quite frankly, the member from Willowdale mentioning—about ringing the bells. That's been a certain aspect about the debate that was, as I debated before my colleague, some of the key things—it's important that the government members realize, as we're dealing with Bill 13, that this isn't something new; that as colleagues in this Legislature we have certain opportunities to deal with aspects of legislation or the process by which this place operates, which we follow the guidelines for, as did the government members that are there now. A significant number of them that are here now would certainly recall a time during their time in opposition when they rang the bells for an entire solid week—every single day, all day long. How does that differ from what's taking place now? We'd go about that—

Interjections.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: The deputy leader specifically says, "Oh, it's about legislation." Well, quite frankly, it's about process and the way things operate in this Legislature.

As opposition members, we have certain aspects that deal with these things, and we will continue to use those to our best ability. Quite frankly, if you look at Hansard, you'll see where another member of the current government at their time spoke for an entire month.

Certainly when we're dealing with Bill 13 and trying to move other aspects forward, we have these aspects that we're talking about, and I recall, quite frankly, one of the members from Windsor who's no longer with us, Ms. Papatello, who spoke in committee for two years in order to stop one single piece of legislation that came forward at that particular time. Of course, there's the famous occupation of the Legislature. This isn't something new, Mr. Speaker.

I want to remind these individuals here that what takes place is a process by which is established—and so long as you comply with the process and deal with what is presented before you in the fashion that you're allowed to do it, it is all part of the parliamentary process of which we will continue to do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. James J. Bradley: There's a significant difference, of course, Mr. Speaker, as you would realize being an observer of this House, and that is that what we have now is a minority Parliament; that is, the government does not have the votes in the Legislature to win, and the government is at a disadvantage in committee.

This is a different circumstance. I can understand the opposition, and this opposition and other oppositions have utilized the ringing of bells in other circumstances. That was a majority government. They had no chance of winning any votes, and we weren't in the very challenging circumstances we are in the province now. On a daily basis, members of the opposition get up and say that the world is coming to an end economically in the province of Ontario. Indeed, we're seeing some major challenges around the world.

In the context of the very serious circumstances we face, in the context of the fact that the opposition has the majority of votes in the House, it seems to me the utilization of the ringing of bells is not an appropriate utilization on this particular bill, for instance.

I recognize that there are opponents of this bill on the other side of the House, and I think they are entitled to debate as they have determined. Members of the government have contributed previously to the debate. Our government members are satisfied, those who have spoken, with the bill and are prepared to see it go to committee. Members of the opposition may not be and may wish to continue to debate it. That is the right of the opposition, and that is the way this Legislature should work.

What we see is a totally irresponsible opposition, in my opinion. I know you don't agree over there, and I don't expect you're going to—but totally irresponsible. You're bringing the business of government to a total standstill at the present time, and you can wear it. With all the bills that are waiting at the present time to be processed by this Legislature, you can weigh that before you make your final decisions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions, comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I am so pleased that I was able to get a two-minute lecture from the Minister of the Environment on how this place works and doesn't work. He's certainly got his opinion. He's been here longer than anybody here, so he's had time to formulate those opinions.

But his view on whether or not the Parliament, based on a minority or majority, should determine how it conducts itself: You would think, given that this is a minority Parliament and the Minister of Health would have known that full well—I do believe she's aware of the composition of the Parliament—that she would not have stood in her place repeatedly—repeatedly, I say, Mr. Speaker—and said to this Legislature, "I will abide by your will on the issue of a select committee to study the scandal that our government has brought on"—she didn't actually say that, but I'm just throwing that part in there because it is brought on by her government. But she repeatedly said it and she followed that up with also stating it out in scurms in the hall, that she would abide by the will of the Legislature.

So when the Minister of the Environment chastises us and scolds us on this side, the one thing you have in government—in Parliament, the government still holds all the cards. They are the government. The Premier sits on that side. All the ministers of the crown sit on that side. We have very few tools with which to hold this government to account, and one of them is that we can express our views in this Legislature by calling for adjournment of the debate or adjournment of the House.

It is not because we are opposed to any particular bill or piece of legislation. In fact, we have continued to debate. If this government wants, they can bring forth a closure motion on this bill any time they want. It's up to the government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate, and I certainly wish this isn't the debate we're having.

I think it's the nature of the issue that is most concerning here. For people who are watching on TV, what is happening here right now is, you've got this side of the House trying to debate a motion that is going to bring anti-bullying legislation to schools in the province of Ontario.

As we speak, right now we've got kids who are committing suicide in schools because they're being bullied. We've got kids with mental health issues who are being

bullied. We've got kids who are being bullied because of race issues and culture issues, gender identity issues.

What's happening in this House is our ability to move that forward, to do something about that as a Legislature, is being stymied because the opposition has a different opinion on an entirely different bill.

I'm suggesting that we had some great input from the member who has just left us, from Liz Witmer. I think she brought some excellent ideas. We were prepared to incorporate those ideas in this legislation that's going into the schools. Instead, games continue to be played by that side of the House. I could understand it on another bill; on this bill, you'd think we would have the fortitude to come together as a House and to get this through.

The public out there needs to be very, very clear about what's happening. We're trying to get legislation into our schools that will end the bullying that has been taking place, that has resulted in the tragedies that have cost kids their lives, and on the other side of the House, we're seeing this legislation being blocked—

Hon. James J. Bradley: Hijacked.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: —hijacked in a way that simply doesn't pay tribute to the importance of the issue.

It's an issue that, if we got beyond the partisan stuff, got beyond the party stuff, I think we'd all agree on.

We've had 17 hours of debate on this. It's time to move forward. I'm asking the opposition to allow this bill to go forward. Bring your ideas forward to committee. Let's move. The kids want us to do this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Oxford has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the members from Oshawa, St. Catharines, Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and Oakville for their comments. I was somewhat sorry to hear that there were no comments about my presentation on Bill 13 or part of my presentation on Bill 14, because they were all talking about something else.

I just want to point out, first of all, that my presentation was about putting the two together, but I think the government is somewhat disingenuous when they say that they are trying to do that too. We remember that Bill 14 was before committee, and subcommittee refused to meet so we could actually start the process to review that bill—until this happened. I don't know whether they knew that this would be the final outcome. We tried three times, and once we had them all together—and they said they were not comfortable to hold the meeting.

The other thing I was really taken by was the comments from the Minister of the Environment when he says that there's somehow a difference between ringing the bells if you're in a minority or a majority government. There is absolutely nothing in—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Minister of Education.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: —which way or the other.

I would just point out that the minority government was predicated on that the voice of the whole Legislature

should count for something. When the whole Legislature voted in favour of having a select committee to get to the bottom of the mess at Ornge, the House voted in favour of that, the minister said she would adhere to that, but when the time came, Mr. Speaker, she did not adhere to that. She decided to just leave it sit there, that it was not important what the majority of the House said—and that's where the difference is between majority and minority. The majority of the House said we should have a select committee, and the government refused to have a select committee.

This has nothing to do with the bills we are debating. The bell-ringing is to get a select committee on Ornge to get to the bottom of the mess that's there. If the government would just have that select committee, we could move forward and get these bills passed, and we could get these things into legislation to help the children and prevent—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm very pleased to join in the debate today to speak about Bill 13, the Accepting Schools Act, 2012. I want to say to some of my colleagues here in the opposition benches how impressed I am with some of the debate that I've seen from them so far.

As a parent, I've been touched by some incredibly moving and deeply personal stories and truly heartfelt comments that we've heard, not just from some of our members but members from all sides. I think it's clear that bullying is an issue that we all agree needs to be addressed in our schools and, I think it's important to stress, in society as well.

I, too, have heard from many of my constituents, one even this afternoon, on this issue, and I'm looking for a common theme from their emails, their letters and their phone calls. I think one theme stands out: What my constituents are telling me is that we need a comprehensive approach to the problem of bullying. They know—and I think, deep down, we all do—that there's no magic bullet. We're not going to pass Bill 13 and be able to say "Mission accomplished; problem solved," because I think we all know it's a complex issue. I think we all agree, at least we do here, that we need a comprehensive solution. Certainly, that's the approach that the PC caucus have taken right from the start of this issue. That's why I want to acknowledge the tremendous work of the former member from Kitchener–Waterloo and also the terrific advocacy our education critic, the member for Nepean–Carleton, has done on the subject.

1730

I had the opportunity to take a look at the very passionate comments that the member for Nepean–Carleton made with her leadoff remarks on March 26. I actually want to quote from some of her comments that day, because I think her comments speak to the very heart of why our caucus is simply unable to support Bill 13. I'll quote from the member of Nepean–Carleton right now, Speaker, with your indulgence:

"I think we can do better. We must remember why we are here: to make Ontario a better place for all Ontarians—not just some, but all; not just the strong, but also the weak; not just the straight, but also the gay; not just the thin, but also the smart; not just the weak in learning abilities, but also those people who are working hard; not just for the overweight; not just for the learning-disabled. We have to protect all Ontarians, regardless of why they're being bullied. That is our job. That is why we were sent here. We cannot continue to have any more of these problems in our schools. That is the issue."

Recently, in the town of Gananoque in my riding, Trustee John McAllister of the Upper Canada District School Board hosted a forum on bullying. More than 60 parents were in attendance, and I want to publicly commend Trustee McAllister for organizing this opportunity for people to come and express their views on the subject.

One of his messages that night to parents was to stress that school boards and schools are addressing the issue, and certainly I want to say that I believe that it's now taken more seriously than it ever was, certainly if you look back on how it was treated when I was a student many, many years ago.

I think some of the ideas that our Ontario PC caucus have put forward on bullying would be a giant step forward in helping school boards do an even better job. I think it's appropriate, Speaker, for me to talk about some of the flaws that I, and some of my colleagues, see in Bill 13.

Our definition—I'm using our definition in referencing the former bill from the member from Kitchener-Waterloo—of bullying would be more thorough, because we focus on what constitutes bullying and how it affects the victim. The Liberal bill, Bill 13, is a bit preoccupied with the reason for bullying, whether it's gender, religion or race, and doesn't place enough emphasis on the form or outcome of bullying. Bill 13's definition, the Liberal definition, focuses on the perceived power imbalance based on the aforementioned individual factors. Our definition doesn't require specifically stating what the individual factors are, since it is designed and written to include all conceivable reasons one may be bullied.

The PC definition includes the impact that bullying has on the school environment, the education process and

the victim's emotional well-being. Our definition is longer, it's more detailed and it's more comprehensive.

As a number of my colleagues have stated in debate today and on other days, we include a section entirely devoted to the issue of cyberbullying. I know it's an issue in my riding. I can speak to the Brockville Police Service that spent a great deal of time in the past couple of years trying to educate parents on the issue of cyberbullying, because we know that with today's technology bullying doesn't stop when the final bell rings at the end of the school day. The inclusion of cyberbullying is critical due to the increasing prevalence of Internet-based bullying. I think we all know, Speaker, that the Internet allows perpetrators to relentlessly bully and harass their victims 24 hours a day, often anonymously.

Again, I know that there have been a number of heckles that we've seen from the other side on some of the reasons why we rang the bells. Again, I want to differentiate, Speaker, if I might, why we're raising issues in this Legislature. As I said in my lead question today in question period, we have a real issue with the way this government handled and is continuing to handle the scandal behind Ornge. For that reason, and that reason alone, Speaker, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

All those in favour will say "aye."

And all opposed, "nay."

The nays have it—it'll be a 30-minute bell. Call in the members.

The division bells rang from 1736 to 1806.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Members, take your seats.

Mr. Clark has moved adjournment of the debate.

All in favour will please stand and be counted by the Clerk.

Opposed?

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 49; the nays are 0.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The motion carries.

Second reading debate adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It being after 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1807.

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N° 46

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**Legislative Assembly
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de l'Ontario**Première session, 40^e législature**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)****Journal
des débats
(Hansard)****Wednesday 2 May 2012****Mercredi 2 mai 2012**Speaker
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Toronto ON M7A 1A2
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Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 2 May 2012

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 2 mai 2012

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ATTRACTING INVESTMENT AND CREATING JOBS ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 VISANT À ATTIRER LES INVESTISSEMENTS ET À CRÉER DES EMPLOIS

Mr. Duguid moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 11, An Act respecting the continuation and establishment of development funds in order to promote regional economic development in eastern and southwestern Ontario / *Projet de loi 11, Loi concernant la prorogation et la création de fonds de développement pour promouvoir le développement économique régional dans l'Est et le Sud-Ouest de l'Ontario.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Debate?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just for your information, I'll be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the member for Etobicoke Centre, and I'm looking forward to hearing her comments. But before that, I'm looking forward to making a few of my own.

Mr. Speaker, the bill we are talking about here is called the Attracting Investment and Creating Jobs Act. It's a very important bill for eastern Ontario and southwestern Ontario.

This morning, I want to start off with a bit of a mea culpa, and I know that'll get the attention—it already has got the attention—of the opposition, but it's not what you think. I was just downstairs where we have a barber here, Frank Filice, who I think did a great job on my hair this morning. But my mea culpa is, if you've ever seen the Seinfeld episode where you've been going to the same barber for almost your entire life, my barber, John Spanos—I need to apologize to him today. I've just been too busy. I haven't been able to get over there, and I was beginning to look like a bit of a beatnik, Mr. Speaker, so I thought I'd better get my hair trimmed today, just so I could look good for my friends on the opposite side of the House who have to watch me as I speak about this very important bill.

I'm delighted to be here today to talk about Bill 11, the Attracting Investment and Creating Jobs Act. It's an

extremely important piece of legislation that's going to help us create jobs in southwestern Ontario and eastern Ontario.

We've had the eastern Ontario development fund for about three years now, which has created about 12,000 jobs in eastern Ontario. With an investment in the neighbourhood of I think around \$53 million, we've been able to leverage \$493 million of private sector investment. That's really significant. That's an eight-to-one private sector investment ratio. What that means is that for every dollar of public dollars that go into this fund, \$8 of private sector development has come out. So that's very, very good value. And 12,000 jobs have been created in the last three years in eastern Ontario as a result of these—

Interjection.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, I'm getting heckled already. Just wait until you hear what else I have to say later on and see how the heckling picks up. I will get political today, a little bit, on this, because I think it's time to do that, but I'm not going there yet. I'm getting heckled already, and I haven't even gotten warmed up. But that's okay; I don't mind. I've been here a long time, and I can handle that.

I think the PCs are feeling a little bit uneasy about this piece of legislation, because I think they know they should be supporting it. We're talking about creating jobs in eastern Ontario and southwestern Ontario, Mr. Speaker, and the fact is, they actually have a lot of seats in those areas. Their mayors and their constituents have been telling them that they should be supporting this legislation, and we're really disappointed that they're not.

This legislation came forward for second reading. It went to committee, and at committee it had a lot of debate—some good debate—and it comes back here amended. The NDP decided to support the legislation, but they brought forward a number of amendments at committee, and we welcomed their input.

I've got to tell you and the critics here that I wasn't enthusiastic about all the amendments they brought forward. I may have done it a little bit differently. In fact, we would have; our intent was to do it differently. But in a minority government situation and, indeed, really in this place, this is the way we probably should work, whether it's a minority or a majority.

We listened carefully. As I said, we didn't agree with everything. I think that part of the way the NDP has amended the legislation—and we agreed with it—makes it a little bit more difficult to administer; we recognize that. It makes it a little more challenging for us in bring-

ing it forward. But in the interest of compromise, Mr. Speaker, we agreed to go ahead with that, and we're going to make it work.

We're going to make it work because our first priority—in fact, our only priority when it comes to this legislation, and I think the NDP would agree with this—is to create jobs: jobs in eastern Ontario, jobs in south-western Ontario, parts of our province that suffered greatly during this last global recession. They got hit pretty darned hard.

I was out in eastern Ontario just yesterday, and I was speaking to a number of businesses out there, some in the clean tech sector and a number in the high-tech sector in general, and they're making a comeback out there in eastern Ontario. You can see it. You can feel it. There's a comeback happening in that economy out there.

They got hit pretty hard when Nortel closed down in Ottawa. There were a lot of people from eastern Ontario who were attached to Nortel, and there were a lot of suppliers to Nortel from eastern Ontario that got hit pretty hard. But you really get a feeling that there's a little bit of air under their wings.

This is a great time for us to be moving forward with just a little bit of help for some of those businesses that want to locate into Ontario, for local communities to be able to attract some of those businesses here, and for some of those businesses that want to expand in eastern Ontario. This gives them the ability to do that—just a little bit of help, a little bit of a boost.

So I want to thank the NDP for working with us on this. As I said, the amendments weren't exactly what we would have done; they're not exactly what we had wanted. But we're going to work with it—we're going to make it work—because I think that's really the spirit of what this Legislature should be.

That gives me all the more reason, though, to express disappointment at the participation of the PC party at committee. Up until this time, they've expressed absolute opposition to this bill. Rather than presenting amendments or ideas as to how we can strengthen this fund and make it even better, Mr. Speaker, instead they just said, "We're voting against it." In other words, again they were going AWOL, absent without leadership. Mr. Speaker, that's what we saw during the budget debate. It's that same approach. I'll give them marks for this: They're consistent.

The challenge I think I have is that they're abdicating their responsibility, as the official opposition in a minority government, to work with us to make our legislation as good and as strong as it can be to serve the needs of their constituents. After all, that's what we're all here to do: serve the needs of our communities and our constituents.

0910

We've just been through a global recession. We're just on the verge of recovering here. In fact, we're very much past that verge of recovery, because we've already created more jobs than we lost during the recession. Over 350,000 net new jobs have been created in this province

since the recession, Mr. Speaker, 350,000 net new jobs since the recession. Last month alone, the month of March, 46,000 net jobs were created in this province. That's full-time jobs—46,000 full-time jobs. One of every two jobs created in this country was created here in the province of Ontario.

What's even more exciting is the fact that one of every four jobs created in the United States and Canada combined was created here in Ontario. That tells me something; that tells all of us something: We're going in the right direction. Our plan is working, Mr. Speaker. We have the fundamentals of growing a strong economy. We have one of the best workforces in the world. We have incredible infrastructure. We've invested a lot in upgrading our infrastructure. That has helped create jobs and it helped keep people working during this past global recession. It has taken us from a position of having an infrastructure deficit to being very competitive with our infrastructure.

We've brought taxes down for businesses, Mr. Speaker. We've gone from an uncompetitive tax environment here in Ontario to one now that's highly competitive, not only in North America but around the world. The result is that we're one of the top destinations for foreign direct capital in all of North America.

We've been working very hard at building the fundamentals of a strong economy over the last eight years, and I think, Mr. Speaker—

Interjections.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I know the opposition likes to heckle, but I think they should also accept the fact, and actually be proud of the fact, that this government—but not just this government—this government and Ontarians have worked very, very hard to put Toronto and Ontario into a position of global leadership, a position of very competitive global leadership.

When you look at some of the sectors in our economy that are global-leading—you look at our clean tech sector, and the Minister of Energy is here today. He was with me in Ottawa, when we were speaking to people from all over the world, just yesterday. What were they doing? They were singing the praises of Ontario, calling Ontario a global leader in the clean tech industry, in very important areas: yes, solar and wind development, but also smart grid development and storage innovation and all kinds of other new sectors that are opening up, creating jobs in this province.

That's because of the vision of our Premier. That's because of the hard work of the Minister of Energy. That's because of the hard work of Ontarians and companies in Ontario to be innovative. Our post-secondary institutions are doing some of the best research known to anybody in the world in these areas.

Mr. Speaker, if you look at the auto sector, we're the single most successful cluster for auto in all of North America. That's something to be proud of. That auto sector has been through a tough time. But, you know, in March they had the best sales for cars in Ontario since 1989. They're back on the road to recovery. That means

jobs in Ontario. You know what? Don't just take my word for it. Take a look at what GM, Ford and Toyota have done just in recent weeks: \$800 million of investment here in Ontario, new investment; 800 new jobs.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: What about the workers? Did they take a hit?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The member asked, "What about the workers?" Eight hundred new jobs were created here in the province of Ontario because of these important investments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I would remind the minister that we don't do cross-dialogue with the other members when you make your presentation.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, but I do welcome input from the members opposite from time to time, especially when it's constructive. But I certainly take your advice very seriously.

I think it's really important—and I turn to my friends on the other side, in the PC Party. It's really important that they listen to their constituents on this legislation, that they put their communities, jobs in their communities, ahead of their political priorities. I know how challenging that can be. But I ask them to fight in their caucus for jobs. I ask them to stand up for their communities, to stand up for their mayors, stand up for the people in their communities who are calling on them to do that.

I've got a few quotes here. Don't just take my word for it. Let's reach outside of this Legislature; let's quote some of the community leaders out there who support what we're trying to do here, leaders like Randy Hope in Chatham-Kent-Essex, and Lambton-Kent-Middlesex—two ridings held by members in the opposition party. This is what Mayor Hope had to say. He's talking about the PC Party here: "A political party that thinks they understand business certainly doesn't if they voted against (the bill)." Mayor Hope is standing up for his community. I think it's incumbent on the members opposite to do the same, to take his lead, to be a leader in this area. Be a leader; get out there and fight for jobs.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Fight for jobs.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Let's talk about London. The Minister of Energy is from London. His mayor is Mayor Joe Fontana. He said in the St. Thomas Times-Journal—he was quoted in March of this year—"Sometimes, you've got to decide not what should be the party line but what would be good for the towns and cities in your (riding).... From time to time you have to stand for your constituents and communities ... that's why people elect you."

That's why people elect you: not to always toe the party line but to stand up for them from time to time, especially when it comes to creating jobs, because nothing is more important to the people of this province today. Nothing is more important to them than creating jobs. To be frank, they probably don't care about the to and fro that goes on in here. They just want to have a good job to support their families, and that's what these regional economic development funds are there to provide: good jobs in eastern Ontario and good jobs in southwestern

Ontario that families can count on. Mr. Speaker, for the life of me, I do not understand why the PC Party would want to stand in the middle of good jobs for the people of eastern Ontario and southwestern Ontario.

But let me go on, Mr. Speaker. Let me quote John Kastner, the editor of the Stratford Beacon Herald. The members opposite might find this interesting. This is John Kastner, I'll repeat, the editor for the Stratford Beacon Herald. He said this in March: "What happened last week"—and he was referring to the PCs not supporting this legislation—"was a couple of bad days for politics in general and this riding in particular. And the whole notion of"—

Interjections.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Let me say this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Okay, the member from Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Westdale and the member from you know where, Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, if you'd like to have an argument, please take it outside. I'm trying to listen to the speaker. It's very disruptive, and there were two sidebars, too. Next time, the Speaker will not be happy, okay? Thank you.

Hon. Brad Duguid: The Speaker is being very firm today, and I very much appreciate that.

Mr. Speaker, I was quoting John Kastner, the editor of the Stratford Beacon Herald, in his editorial from March 14. That's the paper that actually is in the riding of Perth-Wellington—again, a PC riding. This is what he had to say: "What happened last week"—and he's referring to the PCs not supporting this legislation—"was a couple of bad days for politics in general and this riding in particular. And the whole notion of 'I will go to Queen's Park and fight for this riding' rings a bit hollow now."

He's saying it. It's not that long ago that all of us were out on the hustings saying that we were going to fight for jobs for our constituents. A number of the members opposite come to this place, and some of them are new members, with the intention of fighting for jobs for their constituents, and what's the first thing they're going to do? They're going to vote against jobs for their constituents. They're going to vote against jobs for southwestern Ontario, against jobs for eastern Ontario. Mr. Speaker, I don't think their constituents sent them here to do that. I think their constituents sent them here to fight within their caucus to ensure that their leader gets on the straight and narrow on this issue and to fight here in this Legislature for their constituents and jobs in southwestern Ontario.

I could go on, Mr. Speaker, and you know something? I think I will, because I think this is information that's important, and it's important for the members opposite to hear, because these aren't my views necessarily; these are the views of the local representatives of many of the members opposite.

Let's go to the deputy mayor of Goderich. His name is John Grace. This is what he had to say: This is "the wrong time to be playing politics, the wrong time to hold this up. The last thing we need here is another stall tactic." I'm going to repeat that, Mr. Speaker, because we

have something going on in this Legislature right now that I think is very much in keeping with—the party opposite should very much listen to what Deputy Mayor John Grace says. I'm going to repeat it, because I don't think the members were listening. "It is the wrong time to be playing politics, the wrong time to hold this up. The last thing we need here is another stall tactic."

0920

The reason I raise this quote from Deputy Mayor John Grace, the reason I do that, is right now the opposition party, the PCs, are holding this Legislature hostage by using delay tactics to delay very important legislation. Mr. Speaker, some of the bills they're delaying are really important. Now that we're here with third reading of a bill that's going to create jobs in southwestern Ontario and eastern Ontario, I'm really concerned that they're going to hold up those jobs, because if they hold up this Legislature, if we can't pass this bill, that means no jobs being created in eastern Ontario as a result of these initiatives and no jobs being created in southwestern Ontario. Mr. Speaker, that would be a shame. That would be an absolute shame for the people in those communities, many of the communities represented by the members opposite.

These delay tactics in this Legislature—I understand sometimes the opposition try to make a point, but at a certain point one would think that the public interest would finally come first. Goodness gracious, Mr. Speaker. One would think that they're going to start caring about kids in schools and the bullying that goes on in schools and a piece of legislation before this House that's going to help reduce that. One would think they would care about that enough to say, "Okay, forget about the to and fro in here, let's put kids first." But no, Mr. Speaker, they're not. At this point in time, they're still delaying the legislation.

That's why I'm concerned that they're going to do the same thing when Bill 11 comes forward, which is coming forward for third reading today. I'm concerned that they're going to do the same thing, Mr. Speaker. I don't think that's what the people of Ontario elected them to come here to do. I understand the role of opposition to critique what we're doing, but my goodness, don't hold up jobs for southwestern Ontario. Don't hold up important jobs for southwestern Ontario. Don't hold up legislation that's going to help reduce bullying.

There's also legislation before the House that helps ensure that our landlord-tenant relationship continues in the balanced way that has been the case, really, since my good friend John Gerretsen, the Attorney General, was the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, when he brought forward the changes to the Residential Tenancies Act. He struck the right balance when he brought that forward. There are some changes that need to be placed in that legislation to continue that balance, due to some changes in the sector. Those are changes that are important for tenants across this province.

I can't believe, for the life of me, that the opposition want to get in the way of those changes. I don't under-

stand why they would. Their tactics here in this Legislature, their delay tactics, are now standing in the way of tenants getting a good, balanced piece of legislation forward in this House that's fair for tenants.

So not only are they standing in the way of jobs for eastern Ontario, not only are they standing in the way of jobs for southwestern Ontario, they're also standing in the way of anti-bullying legislation that's going forward and tenant protection that's going forward. But on top of that, they talk about being concerned about getting the deficit wrestled down.

All of us had the same timetable when we went into the last election. Well, the budget bill is now before the House, and that's what that does: It brings the deficit down to zero by 2017-18. It eliminates the deficit, something that, frankly, many economists have told us is the single most important thing we can do in Ontario to create jobs in this province, to build a strong economy and attract investment, the single most important thing we can do. And you know what? They're delaying that, too. They talk about wanting to get the deficit down, and what do they do, Mr. Speaker? They delay our legislation that's going to do just that. Where are their priorities?

It's time to put the people of this province ahead of political tactics. It's time to put the people of this province ahead of political games that are going on in this Legislature. I really hope, Mr. Speaker, that the people of this province begin to focus more on what's going on in this place, because they'll see a government that's doggedly determined to create jobs and build a strong economy, to put in place a southwestern Ontario development fund that's going to create jobs in southwestern Ontario, put in place an eastern Ontario development fund that's going to be permanent and create much-needed jobs in eastern Ontario; that's going to put in place a budget that's going to create jobs right across this province; that's going to get our deficit down to ensure that we continue to have a healthy environment in which to attract investment. That's what they're going to see. They're going to see a government just doggedly determined, during challenging times, to get that done.

They're going to see a third party that's trying their best to continue their political priorities but to work with us when they need to, to ensure that we get this done. At least, that's what they've been doing to date, and I have to commend them for it. That's the job of opposition: oppose, yes, at times, get your view known, have an opinion, express it and try to work with us to make strong measures even better. That's the tactic, for the most part, that the NDP have been taking.

Then you have the PC Party, Mr. Speaker. On this legislation—on just about everything else we've got brought forward—they're AWOL, absent without leadership. I find that very disappointing. I have to think that great Premiers like Bill Davis must be looking at this place and be very disappointed in the behaviour of the opposition party and the Leader of the Opposition. I know that members of his own party are questioning the strategy that they've brought forward, and I think they

are doing it rightfully, because I think they recognize that, for instance, people in southwestern Ontario don't care about the tactics that go on in here until it impacts them. Today, I can tell, very soon they're going to start feeling the impacts of the childish and irresponsible measures being taken by the opposition party to delay the very important legislation that we're trying to get through: the very important budget bill we're trying to get through to create jobs in this province, and legislation that's very important to southwestern Ontario and eastern Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, I want to just quote some headlines, because I think it's really important for the opposition to hear this; I really do. This isn't me talking; these are newspapers, these are headlines—headlines and articles. Not just quotes; headlines. I think they summarize very well what the people of southwestern Ontario think. One is from the Stratford Beacon-Herald from March 14, the riding of Perth-Wellington. This is what it says: "For our MPP, Boss's Orders Trumped Needs of Riding." Mr. Speaker, that's a question of priorities.

Here's another one: "Tory MPPs Miff Local Mayors." That's from the St. Thomas Times-Journal, the riding of Elgin-Middlesex-London. The St. Thomas Times-Journal has it right: The PC members are completely offside with local leaders in southwestern Ontario—completely offside. Local leader after local leader has stood with us on this legislation. In fact, it was their idea. This legislation didn't just come from this party. This legislation didn't just come from our platform. It didn't just appear out of nowhere. This legislation came as a result of requests from local communities, local mayors, local leaders who have asked for this legislation to help them work with their communities and their local businesses to create jobs.

I have another one. This comes from the Belleville Intelligencer. It says, "Milligan Toed Party Line on EODF." I have another one here: "Tory MPPs Stall \$80 Million Jobs Fund." That's from the London Free Press—again, the stalling tactics. I think the people of southwestern Ontario and eastern Ontario will not tolerate the PC Party stalling jobs for their communities. They want those jobs. They want those jobs today; they want those jobs now.

We've made a commitment, if we possibly can, to get these funds flowing this spring. It's not going to be easy. The legislation is just going through the House now, and of course everything will be subject to this legislation passing. But our objective is to get those funds flowing this spring so jobs can be created in places like Kitchener-Waterloo, jobs can be created in places like London, Windsor, Stratford, places like Forest. Large towns, small towns, cities—they need these funds so they can work with their local businesses to create jobs. We're determined to get that done. The NDP have worked with us, as I said earlier. But the PCs are trying to stand in the way of jobs for their communities. I think their constituents, especially when they find out what they're doing, the tactics they're using, are going to be very disappointed.

Mr. Speaker, far be it from me to predict what's going to happen in the future in terms of the politics of Ontario. One never knows. But I think, to be frank, this is going to be an issue in southwestern Ontario, and an issue the PC Party should be paying very close attention to, because the top priority of our constituents is a strong economy. The top priority of our constituents is the jobs that come from that strong economy. That's what this legislation does. It helps local communities grow stronger. It helps local communities bring in investment from abroad. It helps local communities help businesses expand, all of which creates jobs.

0930

We know it's successful. We know it's a successful model because we've done it already in three years in eastern Ontario, and that wasn't a pilot project; 53-some-odd-million dollars invested, over half a billion dollars of private sector investment that comes with it, and 12,000 jobs. There are 12,000 people working in eastern Ontario as a result of the help that this fund created in eastern Ontario. Mr. Speaker, this party believes that the people of southwestern Ontario—people in places in like Kitchener-Waterloo, for instance, London, Windsor and Stratford—deserve the same type of tools to build a strong economy that the people of eastern Ontario have.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to be sitting down in a minute or two here now, but I want to thank my parliamentary assistant, who's going to be following me, for the strong work that she did. I'm going to ask my colleagues here to give her a round of applause because of the strong work she did in committee to help get this bill through, in a minority situation, to work with the third party. Despite the efforts of the PCs to bring this legislation down, she soldiered on and got this bill through committee so we can debate it here today. I'm going to ask you to give her a round of applause for the hard work that she did.

Applause.

Hon. Brad Duguid: The member for Etobicoke Centre is willing to fight for jobs in this community. I know the member from Kingston in eastern Ontario has been fighting for jobs in his community. I know the member from Peterborough fights for jobs in his community. I know the members throughout this party in eastern Ontario and southwestern Ontario are standing up for jobs throughout this province.

The question is, where is the PC Party going to fall on this vote? So far, they've said they're not going to support it. They said at committee they're not going to support it. They didn't support it at committee. They've got bells ringing in this Legislature to delay this legislation moving forward, along with others.

I can only say to the PC Party opposite: think again, take another look, listen to your constituents, listen to what they're saying to you. They want jobs. Stop standing in the way of those jobs. Listen to the mayors in southwestern Ontario as they tell you to stop toeing the line of your leader and start doing the job that you were sent here to do by the people of southwestern Ontario.

Start fighting for them instead of trying to fight with these little delay tactics here in this Legislature.

Join us in building a stronger province of Ontario. Join us in building a stronger economy. Join us in attracting the investment into Ontario that we need to attract. Join us in making Ontario a global economic leader in this global economy. Join us in creating jobs in southwestern Ontario. Join us in creating jobs in eastern Ontario. Join us in creating jobs right across this province.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to turn it over to my very enthusiastic parliamentary assistant from Etobicoke Centre.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Etobicoke Centre.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'm pleased to be able to follow the minister and his enthusiasm for ensuring that this bill does get passed.

I do rise in the House today to speak in support of Bill 11, the Attracting Investment and Creating Jobs Act, 2012, which, if passed, will make the eastern Ontario development fund permanent and, at the same time, will create a new southwestern Ontario development fund.

Mr. Speaker, if you will permit me a little, brief digression, I want to share this morning by remembering a moment in history from last summer. Until last August, Goderich, Ontario, was known as the prettiest town in Canada. Then, as you will remember, tragedy struck in the form of a tornado that ripped apart the heart of the town—virtually, the core of the town was destroyed. Homes, businesses, the town's tremendously important tourist industry, infrastructure—everything took an absolutely devastating hit.

The reason I bring this up isn't the tragedy itself. What's really important is what happened afterwards. The country watched as the community came together in a tremendous and very united response. People went out and they started to work together on search and rescue teams. They cleared the debris, they took part in the recovery efforts, and in some cases, they started this even before the storm was over. You can see all of this evidence if you go on YouTube. It's not very often that I do that, but every once in a while, it's amazing what you find, and this is a really good example of where you can see the heart and soul of the people of Goderich actually doing something for their community.

Along with the individual efforts, we saw the stores also contributing to the recovery, and more broadly, a local disaster fund was created. It actually has drawn, and continues to draw, contributions from not only Canada but actually from right across the United States as well. And, of course, the province did step in as well, with millions of dollars in disaster assistance.

You're probably thinking, "Why is this particularly relevant? What difference does this make?" Well, there are two reasons: first, because the community of Goderich is showing all of us how, with commitment, you can actually overcome a devastating crisis. Goderich is also showing us that we can work together. It has lost

some of its beautiful historic buildings, and the full recovery may, and probably will, take many, many years before it's complete. But the recovery will happen; of that there is actually no doubt. Second, as I said, the recovery was made possible because we actually all worked together to help support that recovery event. When a tree would come down, people didn't argue over whose tree it was or who should be responsible for it; instead, the neighbours came out with their chainsaws and they cleared it up, which is exactly what they've been doing around this province for many years. What the people of Goderich show us is that even in a time of extraordinary disaster and crisis, you can work together to overcome.

Thankfully, many of us will never know what it's like to have our homes or our towns destroyed, but many of us have either had personal experience or know other people who have had the experience of losing their job. We know how everything changes in an instant. Dreams and plans are wiped out. People are left fearing for the future instead of the hopes and dreams of today. They worry that things will never be the same again. Over the last few years, we've seen too many of our neighbours, our friends and our families undergo this experience.

Then, of course, we had the recession. I had the opportunity, many times, to participate, especially in the north, talking to people where this has been an extraordinary challenge when the forest industry was severely hit. When the forest industry was severely hit, it wasn't just the forest companies but, of course, all of the subcontractors. Through all the subcontractors, ultimately it went into the families, and the families that didn't have the pensions anymore to rely on, families that couldn't find any resources for picking up their costs as a subcontractor, found themselves in extraordinarily difficult times. That's why we worked very hard with the forest industry to be able to find some respite, to be able to provide for those families so that in fact they had some future—and even still today the forest industry still has its challenges, because the world has changed in terms of forest products.

So when the recession hit, it was just like a tornado. Some countries and some regions were hit a whole lot harder than others, and we know that parts of the province have been severely affected disproportionately. I spoke of the north, and the same can be said for southwestern and for the eastern part of this province.

So the question that comes up is this: How do we respond? How do we make a difference? What is it we can do? In Ontario, we know the answer. The best way to overcome a crisis is to actually sit down, develop a plan and a strategy and work together to ensure that it actually occurs. When we see our neighbours in need, we help out. We actually reach out with that helping hand to ask what we can do, whether it's in policy and strategy or in actual support. That's why, in 2008, we created the eastern Ontario development fund. It was actually created to attract investment and create and retain jobs.

I spent a fair amount of time in eastern Ontario. I walked through the forests and talked to the people who were trying to hold on to their business. I went to chat with the small business owners in particular, who were having trouble with supply. How was it that we were able to work with them and make sure that they in fact had a future, not only for themselves but for their children? That part of the world was extraordinarily devastated, from my perspective, when the forest industry collapsed. So what was it that we were able to do to work with them?

0940

Through that fund we partnered with businesses through eastern Ontario to create and protect jobs for local families, and Mr. Speaker, the fund is working. I can think of a particular group, the two brothers Stasko, near Cornwall, who now are going to set up an extraordinary business. They have some overseas contracts. And it's due to the good work of the Ministry of Natural Resources that this has taken place, but it also was due to the fact that these two individuals in their community saw a need to develop a company that was sustainable, that was reliable and that could ensure that there would be jobs for the future. It wasn't going to be just a quick-fix solution. The Stasko brothers are to be commended. They took the initiative and they put their mind to what they needed to be able to do. It took some time to do it, but ultimately, they have in front of them what will be a viable business for many years to come.

In Cobourg, Ontario partnered with Bakkavör Foods Canada to build a complete fresh food manufacturing centre, and it created 50 new jobs—a company that the member from Northumberland—Quinte West would like to have go, if his government were in power. That can't happen. When we have put the money in place, when we have ensured that there will be a long-term, sustainable plan to make sure that that company will remain, it's incumbent upon all of us to work together for the people in that community to make sure that this will happen.

I know that I've had many discussions with the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke about this whole issue around partnerships and how we can work together in this fund. We spent a lot of time together, on what we could do together, to raise the necessary concerns and bring them to the people that could make a difference.

A good example was Deslaurier Custom Cabinets. We helped the company improve productivity and expand into new markets, and it created 25 new jobs while protecting the 69 it already had. So we know that 94 people wouldn't be working. That's why I'm counting on this member to support us as we move forward in the development of this fund.

In Brockville, Ontario, we partnered with Trillium Health Care Products to help the company manufacture a new product for a global pharmaceutical customer. This partnership led to the creation of 15 new jobs and protected 267; so nearly 300 people in Leeds—Grenville

that are supportive of the investments, and we're hoping that the member opposite will support them as well.

What we're going to do, Mr. Speaker, if this passes—part of our plan is to create the conditions for not only success in Ontario, but by also making it easier to do business in Ontario. We're building the most skilled workforce, we're cutting the taxes on business investment and we're renewing our infrastructure while introducing programs and networks to help our businesses succeed. There's no question that you've got an open-up-for-Ontario-business attitude: What is it we can do and how can we make a difference?

And while the global economy remains uncertain and volatile, we know our plan is working. Ontario is not only competing, but we're actually winning. We've now created more jobs than we lost during the global recession. Since the recession ended, we've grown by 345,000 new net jobs. In March alone—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Minister of Economic Development and the minister of northern affairs, you're blocking my view of the speaker. Plus, I can't hear her, and it's your own speaker. So we could show some courtesy and take it outside, please.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to share with you as well that in March, we also created an additional 46,000 new full-time jobs. The eastern Ontario development fund played an enormous part in the creation of these jobs. Some \$53.5 million has been invested, but that leveraged \$493 million, an 8-to-1 ratio. Anybody in business will tell you that is an excellent ratio and use of leverage of your money.

The fund is partnered with companies to create or retain more than 12,000 jobs. A KPMG study has said that the eastern Ontario development fund is exceeding job growth targets and that these are sustainable jobs. That's one of the most important things that we've been able to do with this fund: not only to create the jobs but to sustain them so that they have growth and that they're going to be long-term.

Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to add that many of the jobs being created are also being created for highly skilled positions: managers, engineers, scientists. So we're ensuring that as we do that and that goes into the local economy, it also changes the infrastructure in the local economy in terms of not needing as many support services; you're able to pump more money into the local stores. It adds a great measure into the local economy, and adds an extra vibration into the work that's going on in the economy. It spurs that economy and encourages people to buy locally, and that's good for all of us, when that occurs.

There's one more thing that needs to be done. We need to do much more to promote regional economic development in eastern Ontario, and that's why, in this particular act that we're proposing, we would like to make this fund permanent. We would like to see it there on a permanent basis, and that's one of the reasons why

we need the support of all the colleagues in the House. KPMG recommended that the eastern Ontario development fund maintain its current delivery model. I know that was a change that was proposed and an amendment that was accepted. But I still believe that one of the best things we can do is: If it's broken, don't try and fix it. We have something that was working; however, the amendment has gone through. I'm just hoping that dollars are not diverted into unnecessary administration that in fact could go to local businesses. I think it's going to be important for all of us to ensure that that does not take place.

I'd like to share with you a brief testimonial from the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus about the eastern Ontario job fund. I sat at the table many years ago, when this fund was first created, and the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus was instrumental in ensuring that this fund actually started. It was their idea. The quote is, "There is no question from our perspective that over the past four years the fund has helped many businesses in the region expand their capabilities, grow their markets and increase their workforces, all of which have helped eastern Ontario's economy weather very difficult fiscal times." The Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus continues to be a key partner in the delivery and the success of this program.

Mr. Speaker, under the second part of Bill 11, we propose to create the new southwestern Ontario development fund. There's absolutely no question that the need is there. Figures from March alone show Windsor, at 10.7%, and London-St. Thomas, at 8.8%, as having Canada's highest and third-highest big-city jobless rates, and that certainly is unacceptable. That's not all that dissimilar to what was there in the eastern part. So we know that that's how the fund had worked. Using that same model, we can transfer it to the southwest, and it will work there as well.

The numbers don't actually tell the whole story. Southwestern Ontario is home to some of the most innovative and competitive companies in the world, but unfortunately the region has been hit hard by challenges such as the high Canadian dollar and increased global competition. It was the manufacturing heart, really, of this province for many years. There have been plant closures, including those in the automotive and chemical sectors, which in turn have affected the related industrial value chain. That is something that we've seen consistently over the last number of years: As the world has changed in its use of manufacturing, where those jobs have gone, where we had the strength, is where it has been hit the hardest.

It's really our responsibility to sit down and find a way and the means that provide for a sustainable strategy to move forward. How do we help those folks? How do we ensure that they actually do have those jobs? And how do you do it in a way that includes them in that process—because you don't want to not have everybody at the table, as it were—and have a full and complete understanding of the impact of what has happened in their community? I think that's the other part of this. It's not just the

manufacturing jobs that need to be retained, or new jobs that need to come in; you also have to talk about the social fabric of the communities that have been impacted and affected, and how they deal with it in terms of their families, much less in terms of their community.

I think Windsor has done an admirable job in a very difficult time, but I think it's now our responsibility to help them with a model that we actually know works. This is a model that has proven with that leverage of \$493 million—how do we take that model and ensure that it works in southwestern Ontario?

0950

We held extensive consultations before we moved forward with our new fund. We met with people in Owen Sound, Windsor, St. Thomas, St. Catharines, Guelph, London and Kitchener. We asked business leaders, municipal representatives and economic development stakeholders so we could get a better understanding of the key challenges and also the opportunities in the region, and to get input into the design of the process for the fund. We had over 215 people that attended and we received more than 30 written submissions. What was really heartwarming was that the people themselves supported this local fund initiative, just as they did in eastern Ontario. The people in southwestern Ontario recognized that this was something that they needed to have to help them kick-start their local economy. The southwestern development fund is supported by the Southwest Economic Alliance by the Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus, by South Central Ontario Region and the Southwestern Ontario Marketing Alliance.

I think it goes without saying that we've reached a critical time in our economy. I don't think there's anybody that could stand in this House and say everything is perfect; it is far from perfect. It's far from perfect in the world. But what we can say is that we have here in this House the means to be able to work together to find a solution to help people. That's not a hard thing to do. It's a little bit of, if there's a will there's a way.

I think we have a responsibility to the children of the families that are impacted and affected. It's pretty hard for children when they don't see their dad or their mom going to work. It's pretty hard when they can't participate in the things they normally used to because the funds aren't there anymore because there isn't a job. It's difficult for a parent to say to their child, "Our only source of income is employment insurance," and it's also hard to say to that child, "But yet, in spite of all of this, there's a future." What we're saying is, there is a future. If you work with us, we can make a difference that will impact the lives of an awful lot of people. We've proven it in eastern Ontario and we can prove it in southwestern Ontario.

I know that there's lots of bravado that goes on in the House, and I realize that politics do play a part. I understand all of that. But at the end of the day, for me, what's important is how you make a decision that really is the right thing to do on behalf of the people you serve.

I don't live in southwestern Ontario. I don't live in eastern Ontario or in the north, but every part of this province is just as important to me as my own riding, and I really truly believe that we should find a way to work together to ensure, in these really difficult times, that we can and we will be prepared to find some solutions to help each other.

As I said, I've walked the forests in eastern Ontario. I spent a significant amount of time in Windsor. I used to go every month when I was Minister of Transportation because of the work on the new highway and the new bridge into the United States. I want to just share with you that I spent all that time there. When I did, I would go to each of the different regions to have a discussion about things like transportation hubs, how we were going to be able to move the folks and goods and services, especially. I don't know if you know, but in Windsor, for a car manufacturer, one part may cross the border eight times before it actually gets assembled on that vehicle. So it was absolutely essential that we found a way to move that part, with some freedom, so that it wasn't encumbered at the border. Hence, there was the underground rail, and now, of course, the new bridge.

Again, I don't know if you know, but if you were in Detroit and wanted to go to Florida, there's one stoplight. That's it, all the way. But if you hit Windsor and you want to go to Detroit, there are 17 stoplights, so you can imagine the kind of congestion. It's amazing. You would see the trucks just one behind the other, and of course it went right through the centre of town. The difficulty was at one time that was a border town and that was okay. We didn't have these double-rig semis idling hour after hour after hour on a main street that we do now. So we really had to find a solution that worked, that moved that truck traffic, but still allowed the opportunity for car traffic so we could have them both.

So I spent a lot of time and in doing that, it was also sad to see some of those stores that were closed. They would have wood over the windows because there wasn't an opportunity for that store to open. There were high employment issues—

Mr. Monte McNaughton: High hydro bills.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: High hydro bills. There were lots of issues.

We could talk a little bit about hydro, having been there. One of the things that I could share with you is that with all that diesel and with the issue of air pollution out of Nanticoke, because they all don't have scrubbers—I can tell you that closing down Nanticoke and the rest of coal is absolutely essential to clean air in southwestern Ontario because it is part of that airshed that moves that air through to places like mine in Etobicoke Centre.

I digress a little bit, if I may, Mr. Speaker. It speaks to why it's so important. We could even look at clean energy initiatives in a region such as Windsor. Because of that airshed—a third party came and spoke about the challenges on the airshed.

In Etobicoke, there are about 130,000 people—
Interjections.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know they wish to participate in this discussion and maybe we could have it after, but just let me share with you again, in that airshed in Etobicoke, 10% of my population succumb to respiratory disease because a lot of them are seniors. I have up to 2,000 people a year for respiratory disease.

So looking at how you clean air—and it's just as important, I agree, out of Chicago as it is out of Windsor.

So for me, the whole idea is, how do we find a way to have clean air? I'm a huge proponent of clean energy. At the end of the day, you can have that cost analysis when it says economically it's viable to do one. If you want coal—because the coal we burned was dirty coal. It was the worst of all coals. So that, in itself, was a challenge, if we at least had cleaner coal, but we didn't and you can't change—and Nanticoke is old and deserves to be shut down and find another opportunity for energy efficiency in some of the other plants and/or find other alternatives for that site at Nanticoke because it's a huge, huge site.

When you look at Windsor and the fact that they have a huge unemployment rate, you look at the challenges that are faced just as a border town and, again, what happens with those ancillary support services that come through from other companies and/or social services—for example, what is it we can do to minimize the impact on the community? One of the things we can do is work with the community, inject some money, leverage those dollars, create the jobs and change the dynamic in the community that brings them back to what they used to be many years ago.

I say kudos to all of the folks who have worked and lived in the region, especially to those who are in office. They've done an absolutely superb job municipally trying to find ways and means to continue to support their community.

I say the same thing in eastern Ontario. Again, as I said, I travelled many places. The eastern caucus has done an enormous job trying to find and leverage, obviously, those dollars to create additional jobs for all of us. I think it's really important to give them thanks.

How do we do more of that? How do we, you and I, in this House find a way and a means to be able to support these communities? One of the things we've decided could work and has had amendments attached to it and support is through these two funds, one of which would be permanent, the eastern development fund, and also the southwestern fund.

I spoke a little earlier about the Stasko brothers and what they're doing outside of Cornwall. The idea here is that they're going to take the bio-pellet—and they have an enormous contract overseas now. Once they produce the pellet, they can actually export. They started with this because that area, if you'll recall, was severely hit when Domtar left. We had enormous challenges in that area. We had also another border town. We weren't keeping the businesses. We tried absolutely everything we could to induce business to stay. It had an enormous effect. I think 500 jobs were lost in the area.

We sat down with the people who were impacted and said, "Well, what is it we could do?" The Stasko brothers came up with this incredible idea of the bio-pellet, which we also supported. We actually did a fair amount of research at Atikokan—I think it still continues to this day—on the use of biomass as an alternative for energy efficiency.

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This has been used in Europe for decades, so when they found an opportunity here—we had the raw resources, we had the individuals who had the know-how to put this together, we had the will of a government prepared to support them through the Ministry of Natural Resources, and we also had the support of the local government, the municipal government, the region, the caucus. Suddenly, we had a recipe for something that really was going to work. Today, that is a viable company with an overseas contract that exports to Europe a product made in Ontario. A significant number of jobs will be created, but what's more important is it's sustainable, and it will create additional jobs.

So, again, here we are. We have an opportunity. I think we can work together. I think we should work together. I think we must work together. I think it's incumbent upon all of us.

When I think about all the wonderful places that I have been in this incredible province, its greatest resource of all is its people. They are the ones who, if you give them the right tools, can put it all together and make an enormous difference. Again, I say, it's our responsibility to be able to do that.

So I'm asking all of the members in the House to give serious consideration to how we can work together with this bill. I'm asking that we do this now. This is not needed in the future; it's needed today. We need to be able to say to the folks out there that there's hope, there's promise, there will be work, and there will be a future. They deserve it, their children deserve it and, ultimately, all of us benefit. No matter where you live in this province, all of us benefit from economic activity, whether it's the tax dollars that come in to support the ancillary services in support for education or social services or whatever. All of us end up—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I guess the Attorney General didn't listen to my request. You're talking over your speaker. If you want to have cross dialogue, I suggest you take it outside.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): No, he wasn't, and I don't need any comments from the other minister. If the minister wants to make a comment, he might want to get back in his seat.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank all of my colleagues in the House for their indulgence and for their willingness to listen to my perspective on this particular bill. I'm asking them, as I said earlier, to give serious consideration so that we can move forward, not tomorrow but today, on something

that's absolutely vitally important to all the people in Ontario, not to just those two regions. I thank you very much for your attention.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I was glad to listen to the minister and the parliamentary assistant for Bill 11 here.

It's interesting, some of the comments. They talk about economic effects and that, and they're talking about \$20 million spread across eastern Ontario. Well, you know, I'm talking to a guy in Pembroke who would like to reopen a plant there. His hydro bills are \$1 million plus a month—a month. You know what's driving jobs out of this province? You talk about \$20 million over a year all across eastern Ontario, of which most goes to Liberal ridings—Speaker, \$1 million a month in hydro. The global adjustment last month was 7.47 cents a kilowatt hour; this month, it's 5.53 cents a kilowatt hour. You wonder what's driving jobs out of this province? It's your hydro policy.

You can talk all you want about your silly little political games, but the reality is, if you want to have people working in this province, you've got to have an economic policy that allows them to do that.

You've got your crazy green plan that is driving up energy costs beyond the reach of anybody. You want to start talking turkey here, folks? Start talking about what affects everybody, not your picking winners and losers, not your—and then you made sure that the Liberal ridings got 65% or 70% of the money out of the last fund.

Interjection: Eighty per cent.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Eighty per cent, okay. It's 80%. I was actually giving them the benefit of the doubt.

So you want to start talking about what is going to be positive for businesses in this province, small businesses? Let's start talking about your economic policies. Forget about your games and your little bill. Let's start talking about your hydro policy that is going to drive more and more jobs out of this province.

Mr. Speaker, the price of hydro this morning was minus four cents a kilowatt hour. For every kilowatt hour, we're paying Quebec to take it off our hands. That's the silly policy of this government. Shame on them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Speaker, I will have an opportunity soon to do our lead on this bill, and that will give me an opportunity to speak more fully to the bill and to the amendments we made, and to also possibly speak to some of the Conservative concerns they have. I will be able to have that opportunity.

I wanted to congratulate the member from Etobicoke Centre. She has ably defended the government as best she could, dealt with my amendments graciously, and eventually we all agreed on some things that I believe will make things better. I know they disagree with some of the amendments. I will argue that our amendments are good for them and for us, but we won't have the time in one minute to be able to do that. But to say that we made

amendments, for the first time in a long, long time—this is why minority governments often work—or potentially could work.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Hear, hear.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I know some Liberal friends say “Hear, hear,” but they have been reluctant, for eight and a half years, to work with us on many bills where they had the power to give away a couple of crumbs every now and then. It takes a minority to make them sometimes gracious in giving away a couple of things.

All I want to argue is that minority governments can work to make things better, and I’m happy that we have this opportunity to do that. I’m looking forward to my opportunity to do my lead, Mr. Speaker, and will speak then.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Teresa Piruzza: It’s with pleasure that I rise to speak to Bill 11, an act to promote regional economic development. As we’ve heard, the fund has been quite successful in eastern Ontario, helping to create and protect over 12,000 jobs and leveraging over \$493 million. That, to me, speaks to a successful program.

It’s interesting that although our discussions here have centred around jobs and economic development, we’re presenting a program that works, yet there is opposition. One of the consultations took place in my riding of Windsor West. The consultation consisted of employers, an economic development representative, a municipal representative and others. Overwhelmingly, the consultations were supportive of this product, of this investment, an investment in our communities for jobs. I’ve spoken with others as well, and I have not heard any negative comments.

There is a cost to doing nothing. Ontario competes with jurisdictions around the world that offer significant business incentives. I’ve met with employers that are looking at investment, and they’ll tell me what they’re being offered in other jurisdictions. If we’re not at the table, those investments and the jobs will go elsewhere. The return on this investment is evident and supported. This is not a game. You must realize the competitive nature of economic development. We are competing in a global environment.

This act recognizes the unique nature of Ontario’s various regions. We’ve heard the headlines as read earlier by the minister. Our communities are waiting for this. There is recognition of the need, and mayors of all our communities agree that this just makes sense. It’s time to stop the games, to move forward with this fund and to work together for our communities, politics and partisanship aside. Our communities need our support.

Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to speak to this important bill in support of not only my riding of Windsor West but all the ridings in southwestern Ontario and eastern Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. The member from Durham.

Mr. John O’Toole: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’m pleased to respond to the minister, as well as the member from Etobicoke Centre. I think our member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke pretty well said it all in terms of the reality.

In Durham region, we were always concerned why Durham wasn’t included in the east or the west, yet Windsor is. That’s the partisanship that I see being crafted here on a daily basis. It’s unforgivable and unrelenting. The reality of Ontario’s economy is even more striking than that. If you look at the paper here issued by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce—I am casually slipping it open here. What does it say about Ontario? “The Challenges”: 38% of the civic leaders and other leaders in the province feel that we are “not that innovative or not innovative at all.” Innovation in the economy is important. That’s what the chamber says about your performance.

“In 2009, the Ontario-US gap in information and communications technology investment per worker was \$1,350” per person, versus 12% less than other jurisdictions. We’re investing in the wrong things.

I think the discussion on energy—and the minister over there should know. He has messed this file up worse than any single policy file in the province’s history. He was at the table.

Interjection.

Mr. John O’Toole: No, no. Brad, you’ve messed this file up so badly—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Sit down, please. I would ask that you don’t name the member. You name the riding. Thank you.

Mr. John O’Toole: The minister, when he was the Minister of Energy, messed up the file totally.

On research and development, Ontario lags behind. There isn’t one area—you’re picking winners and losers. Let’s face it. Here’s the report card in Ontario. There’s the report card. That’s the media. It says, “Swimming in Red Ink.” And that’s exactly where we are. This particular bill, itself, is another example of picking winners and losers—mostly losers—in Ontario—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. The Minister of Economic Development and Innovation has two minutes to respond.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I’m delighted to respond. We’re here today to debate third reading of a bill that will bring an economic development fund to southwestern Ontario, an economic development fund to eastern Ontario. I think this is an important bill that’s going to bring jobs to those communities, communities that have been hard hit by the recession.

I want to thank the member for Windsor West for her comments and for standing up for jobs in the Windsor area. I want to thank the members, as well, from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and Durham for their comments. I thank the member for Etobicoke Centre for her comments during the debate, and particularly, the member for Trinity–Spadina; I want to thank him as well, not

just for his comments today but for his hard work that he engaged in at committee.

Mr. Speaker, the numbers speak for themselves. Out of 114 projects approved—that's out of 132 applications, an 86% approval rate—only three, Mr. Speaker, have not met their targets. Two out of those three didn't receive funding at all before we identified that they wouldn't be able to meet their targets. That's like a 97% success rate. The eastern Ontario development fund has been working well. It's created over 12,000 jobs in eastern Ontario. I think southwestern Ontario deserves that kind of job creation opportunity as well.

I know the mayors in southwestern Ontario are with us on this. I know the communities in southwestern Ontario are with us on this. I know the people in southwestern Ontario are with us on this, whether they be from Kitchener–Waterloo, whether they be from London, Windsor, Stratford or the many small towns in rural southwestern Ontario. I know they are going to be with us on this. I think the PC party has missed the boat here. I think they're going to pay a huge price. I commend the NDP for working with us.

Mr. Speaker, it's about jobs: jobs in southwestern Ontario, jobs in eastern Ontario. Thank you very much.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. It being close to 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1013 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's my pleasure today to welcome members of the OSSTF from the Ottawa–Carleton District School Board in our region in eastern Ontario. They're up in the gallery today; give everybody a wave. They're here at Queen's Park today to share their message, and I was pleased to have the opportunity to meet with them. I'd like to welcome Dan Maxwell, Tom Bickford, Cheryl Cavell, Nancy Akehurst, Carole Crocker and, of course, Chris Goodsir. Thanks very much, guys, for coming.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I have a very special guest here today. It is Emmy Award-winning Jerry Levitan. He's over here with his son, Dan Levitan, who happens to be a special assistant in my office. Uniquely—and I think the members will be interested in this—the Emmy he won was for a documentary on John Lennon, whom he met as a teenager and corresponded with for their entire life. A very interesting documentary; it won an Emmy. He's also a full-time lawyer here in the riding of Trinity–Spadina.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'd like to welcome my best friend growing up in the village of Newbury: councillor Chris Degraw. Welcome.

Mr. Grant Crack: I too would like to welcome the OSSTF to Queen's Park today, in particular Francinna Collard from my hometown, a good friend from my riding of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. Welcome, Francinna.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm very pleased to welcome the Association of Ontario Midwives. We've got midwifery student Catharine Tunnacliffe and midwifery client Cara Wilkie. Welcome.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: I'd like to introduce some dignitaries from Nazareth, Israel. This morning, we're honoured to have the honourable Mr. Ramez Jaraysi, the mayor of Nazareth, Israel; Mr. Ahmad Affi, chair of the Nazareth fund; Mr. Bishara Kattouf, the chairman of the treasury of Nazareth; Mr. Raji Srouji, director of sports activities; Canadian Arab Friends of Nazareth committee members Munder Jubran and Najla Sakran; as well as Mr. Ayoub Sakran. We're delighted to have them here, and we welcome them this morning. We wish you a good stay here in our beautiful province.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I'd like to introduce Daniel Peat and Lise Etienne from OSSTF. They're up in the gallery this morning.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I know that some of my colleagues have welcomed representatives from their local communities who are here from OSSTF, but I want to welcome everyone from across the province who's here today who hasn't been acknowledged. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Bob Delaney: It's my pleasure to recognize and welcome two constituents from Mississauga–Streetsville who live in the Lisgar neighbourhood. Please join me in welcoming Brian and Therese Ellis on their first visit to the Ontario Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'd like to welcome Matthew O'Mara, the press gallery summer intern, seated in the press gallery this morning. Matthew will be working with the Queen's Park press gallery. He's also a former page and currently at Ryerson University studying journalism. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. John Yakabuski: What about the Speaker's gallery, Speaker?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Just give me a moment. I'll get to it. I've always wanted to make sure the students that are in the press gallery don't learn bad habits.

On behalf of the member of Ajax–Pickering, we do have in the members' gallery Dietmar Arff, Ryan Arff and Ali Shaquat for our page Vincent. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Finally, in the Speaker's gallery today we're pleased to have back to Queen's Park former page Nick Peters, and my other brother and the brother of Speaker Steve Peters, Joe Peters. Welcome back, Joe.

MEMBER FOR YORK CENTRE

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As a small editorial on my behalf, I would like to bring to the attention of the House that May 2 is the anniversary of the 1985 election of Monte Kwinter, in his 27th year today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

JOB CREATION

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Premier. Last night our leader, Tim Hudak, outlined our path for a more prosperous Ontario. We need a new path, Premier, because the path you've taken our province down for the last nine years has failed. We've lost 277,000 manufacturing jobs. Half a million men and women woke up without a job today, and Ontario has had a higher unemployment rate than the rest of Canada for the past 63 consecutive months.

The first budget ever tabled by your government in 2004 promised 490,000 new jobs by the end of 2007. Could the Premier report back to the House on whether he met that target or not?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I'm pleased to take the question and to share more good news about the Ontario economy. Not only—

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Even Harper gets it.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I guess, Speaker, it's important. Maybe we should all take our cue from the Prime Minister, who's recommending to all of us that we be positive when it comes to talking about the Canadian economy and the Ontario economy. I think there is good advice to be found in there for all of us.

Not only did the Ontario job numbers rise by 46,000 in March—all full-time jobs—more than half the jobs created in Canada, but I'd also encourage my honourable colleague to recognize that the CFIB recently said that small business confidence has grown for the seventh month in a row in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: The reality is that under the McGuinty government the news for the Ontario economy is not good. In fact, the Premier missed his target by 163,000 jobs.

Sadly, this isn't the only jobs target that this Premier has missed. In your 2008 budget, you promised 231,000 jobs by 2010. You missed that target by 177,000 jobs. The sad fact, Premier, is that only once in the last eight years have you actually hit your job creation target.

Premier, don't you think the people of Ontario deserve better than one in eight?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I say again, to twist a phrase, into every life a little sunshine must fall. I would encourage them to open their eyes and see the good reasons for optimism and opportunity to be found here in Ontario.

Here's another piece of important good news I'd encourage my honourable colleagues to accept: Export Development Canada has recently said that Ontario's export growth will lead the country not only in 2012 at 9%, but also in 2013 at 9%.

Again, I remind my honourable colleagues, while our budget originally projected a rate of growth last year of 1.8%. Stats Canada has in fact said we've exceeded that. It came in at 2% and the economy is moving forward,

Speaker, and it could move forward even faster if we could deliver on our plan by working with the opposition.

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: We'd like to see a little sunshine, Mr. Speaker, but the fact is, this government is giving us no sunshine and not letting any light in on a whole variety of topics.

It's time for a new approach in Ontario, Premier, an approach that focuses on job creators, one that gets our fiscal house in order, creating a sound environment for businesses to grow and prosper. We need a plan that not only removes barriers for job creators, but one that rewards those that want to grow. That's the approach the Ontario PC Party wants to take.

Premier, why did your budget ignore this path and embrace a decade of economic decline and downgrades? Why are you taking this path?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: A lot of negativity there, Speaker, a lot of negativity. I'm reminded of that wonderful Winnie the Pooh character Eeyore: Everything was so painful, nothing was ever going to get any better, and the sun would never shine and it was always going to rain.

Interjection.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Actually, that just came to me right now. I swear, Speaker it just came to me here, right now.

There is reason for good news, Speaker. We learned that just yesterday WestJet has indicated that they're going to be ordering up to 45 Bombardier Q400s from the Downsview plant. That supports 4,050 jobs plus thousands of spin-off jobs right here in Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

New question.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Good morning, Speaker. My question is for the Premier. Our party has spoken often of the problems with the so-called Green Energy Act. First off, there's nothing green about it. Wind power has simply replaced clean, renewable water power. So far, the GTA hasn't paid much attention because wind turbines are not in their backyard. But yesterday, the consequences of wind turbines hit their front door in the form of a skyrocketing hydro bill in their mailbox. Ontario now has the second-highest energy prices in all of North America.

Premier, when are you going to admit the feed-in tariff scheme is holding back Ontario from growth and opportunity?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I kind of expected the honourable member would put a question to us about the ONTC, which is a very important issue in his riding, but

I'm pleased once again to have his continuing support on the measure that we've adopted here in government.

On the matter of green energy, Speaker, I know that it is no longer a secret: The member opposite is in fact green at heart. He's a champion of green energy in the province of Ontario. In fact, he championed an effort in his own riding to put solar panels on city hall. We commend that.

Speaker, I know my honourable colleague says a lot about the green energy plan, but Shakespeare said, "action is eloquence," and I think my honourable colleague has been most eloquent in terms of the action of adopting those solar panels on his city hall.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Premier, I spoke loud and clear about Ontario Northland when I voted against your budget.

Yesterday you said that the feed-in tariff program accounted for only 5% of electricity bills, but in your 2010 fall economic statement you said 56% of the increase in electricity rates is due to renewable energy generation. Now, we both know that the energy scheme is causing skyrocketing energy bills. You've said it will create jobs, but we've yet to see the proof of that, Premier. In fact, the Auditor General stated that for every green job, we lose two to four jobs in other sectors.

Premier, when will you cancel the green dream that has turned into a nightmare for 600,000 Ontarians?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Once again, Speaker, I want to return to statements offered by our secret champion of clean and green in the province of Ontario, that we have strategically positioned within the Conservative caucus. This is what he said on April 4, 2005: "Taking advantage of locally available green power resources is a good fit with the long-range development strategy we have for the community."

Interjection: Well said.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Well said. I think that statement speaks volumes about my honourable colleague's true sentiments when it comes to clean energy. The fact of the matter is that we're creating thousands of new jobs here in Ontario. At the same time, we're cleaning up our air—something that we owe to our families—we are shutting down coal-fired generation and we're building an exciting new industry that will take us into the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Considering that's the 10th time the Premier has talked about my wonderful career as mayor, I thought I would give you a book, through a page, that talks about the highlights of my career as the mayor of the city of North Bay. This covers—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Order. The member knows that that would be classified as a prop. Thank you. Carry on with your question.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. It was the 10th time they brought it up. I thought I would at least present them something.

Nonetheless, yesterday, another renewable energy company found out just how flawed and unworkable this energy scheme is. Siliken, a solar panel maker in Windsor, Ontario, laid off 40 staff. This comes after Wind-Tronics, a company you gave \$2.7 million to, pulled up stakes and moved to Michigan. You gave false hope to the renewable sector and as soon as your rich subsidy was reduced, sales fell and jobs disappeared—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you, Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, as we grow this exciting new industry in the province of Ontario, at the same time as we clean up our air and bring new jobs to our families, there will inevitably be some ups and downs in the industry. There will be the occasional shakeout. We have just, on behalf of the people of Ontario and ratepayers in particular, driven down costs with respect to the amount that we're going to pay for clean energy. That's going to put new pressure on the sector itself. That's going to put new pressure on the businesses that are out there. It's going to result in some declaring themselves to be less than competitive, not able to meet the prices that we've put in place. We understand that, we accept that and we expect that. But we will not waver in our resolve to build an exciting, new clean energy industry here in Ontario that creates new jobs for our families and cleans up the air for our children, especially, and for our seniors, too.

JOB CREATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. This week, the Premier has talked up his jobs council as a way of helping half a million people in Ontario who are out of work. When is it actually going to get off the ground?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Shortly. Shortly, I say to my honourable colleague. I'll tell you what the intent is behind this. What we'd like to do through our jobs and prosperity council is, first of all, to have solid representation on that from business, labour, academics, government representatives and the like. Our intention is to develop a consensus here in Ontario that helps us better understand the nature of our challenges and the nature of our strengths so that ultimately you and I can knock on business doors around this province and ask everybody, "What is it that we're doing here in Ontario to make ourselves better than anybody else, and what's your role that you need to play in that?" That's the purpose of our jobs and prosperity council.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The government said that it's going to review its business support and bring it all under the jobs and prosperity council—the jobs and prosperity fund. Will the Premier agree that that fund needs to include a job creation tax credit which actually rewards the companies that create jobs in our province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I've said to my honourable colleague, and I appreciate the engagement she has had

in this matter, we are going to take a good look at her proposal for a job creation tax credit. I think we have a responsibility to have an open mind on this. But I think we also need to run it by our jobs and prosperity council—people who work on the front lines in particular, the labour community and the business community—to get a good sense of what works today and what it is that might work even better tomorrow. Among those considerations, of course, will be the proposed job-creation tax credit.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Earlier this morning, the Premier was talking about jobs gained in March but forgets the thousand of jobs that were lost the month before that or the fact that Ontario ranked absolutely dead last of all provinces in wage growth this month. We can do better than that. We need to do better than that.

A job creation tax credit will reward the companies that create jobs. It's simple math: create a job, get a tax credit. When can Ontarians expect to see a reasonable, achievable solution that will make life better for all of those thousands and hundreds of thousands of people who are looking for work?

1050

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I must say this is a great example of a positive, constructive proposal that is worthy of our consideration, and we look forward to doing that in earnest.

What I will do is take this opportunity as well, though, to offer a suggestion to my colleagues in the official opposition. At some point in time, they've got to become more interested in bills than bells. They continue to act in a very obstructionist manner, Speaker. Whether you're talking about our desire to make our schools safer, more accepting and more respectful of all of our children in time for this September by moving ahead with our Accepting Schools Act, or our healthy homes renovation tax credit, or protecting people who want to stay at home to look after a family member who is sick—those are important initiatives we need to pursue on behalf of the people of Ontario. I'd recommend to them that they move beyond the bells so that we can together consider the bills.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Premier. Instead of making it easier to create jobs, the government is making it harder in Ontario. The mess in our electricity system is one good example. In fact, an industrial employer in Toronto is paying as much as \$3 million more a month for power than companies in neighbouring competitive provinces.

Will the Premier agree that our hydro system, with its private power deals and its alphabet soup of agencies, is driving up costs for households and businesses?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Making sure that businesses have reliable power is absolutely something we've

been engaged in for eight years. Remember where we were. We have reliable power. Driving down the cost of that power is something that we're working very hard at. You know that we've introduced legislation to combine agencies. We're taking costs—half a billion already—out of two of our public agencies which provide and transmit power around the province. We have conservation initiatives where businesses—the 150 top consumers in the province—can benefit from reducing their peak power consumption. We have conservation initiatives that allow businesses to retrofit so they use less energy.

We will continue to look for ways to make sure that businesses have a competitive power structure and a reliable one in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, we need to look at a new path, and instead we get more of the same from this government.

According to the OEB, the Ontario Energy Board, 45% of the growth in electricity prices is due to growing costs of nuclear power. But instead of dealing with this reality, Ontarians are paying to refurbish the Bruce A nuclear units, to the tune of at least \$5 billion.

Will the Premier admit that the only thing this system of expensive private power contracts does is actually cost Ontarians more?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Let's just set the context here: Nuclear power is half of our power. If we turn it off, as the NDP seems to be suggesting, half of everything just gets shut off like that. Nuclear power has been a clean, reliable source of power for decades in the province of Ontario, and it supports, might I add, 80,000 jobs in the province of Ontario—all good-paying jobs—which the NDP would put out of work like that if they were eliminated.

We're determined to make sure that we have clean, reliable power. We're refurbishing the nuclear units at Darlington, but the NDP needs to come clean on its shut-down process. They're going to shut down half of our power and put 80,000 people out of work. Is that really where they want to take the province of Ontario?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The reality is, rising electricity costs are taking a huge bite out of the pockets of families and employers. That's because this government is signing private power contracts that are out of whack with the market in Ontario and in competitive jurisdictions. Instead of making power public and affordable, the government is forking over \$2 billion not to build gas plants in Oakville and Mississauga, and billions and billions is being forked over for contracts on new nuclear power that just don't add up.

Will the Premier admit that Ontario needs to rethink the private power schemes that keep costing Ontario more and more on every single bill?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: For us, it's about what's best for families and businesses. They need reliable power, and we're working hard to manage the cost.

About 65% to 70% of the power we consume is through public sources—not private, public sources. The nuclear industry that they want to shut down is largely public sources of power. We're determined to look at everything, to make sure we can deliver clean, modern, reliable power to the families and businesses of the province of Ontario. We are challenging every agency we have and everyone who would be able to produce power.

The bottom line here is, you have to produce it at a price that's best and reliable for families and businesses, public, private or any combination in between.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the government House leader. Speaker, you will know that last Thursday, in response to questions here as to when the government will allow a select committee of the Legislature to pursue the Ornge scandal, the government House leader said that he would look to the committee itself to self-determine those terms of reference and how it conducts business.

We accepted him at his word, and I responded by saying we will then return to the public accounts committee and bring forward a motion to make that request of the House. We did that this morning. I delivered a copy of that motion that was passed by the public accounts committee this morning making that specific request.

My question to the government House leader: Now that he has the express will of the public accounts committee to expand those terms of reference, will he agree to bring that motion forward and pass it—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Government House leader?

Hon. John Milloy: The honourable member raises a valid point. That is, is the Ornge situation being properly examined? I think it's worthwhile for everyone in this Legislature to take a step back and begin with the fact that the Auditor General, an officer of this Legislature, has done a comprehensive review of Ornge. Second, the public accounts committee, a standing committee of this Legislature which has been charged with all the powers and privileges of all standing committees of this Legislature, is looking into the matter of Ornge. Thirdly, as a result of the encouragement of the Minister of Health, we have the Ontario Provincial Police looking into the Ornge situation. Finally, we have a bill before this House, Bill 50, which, if it is passed, will presumably go to a committee and be the subject of investigation.

I want to reassure all members that Ornge is being looked into.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: I have to say that I cannot believe the response from the government House leader. It was the government House leader who said that he would rely on the public accounts committee to determine for itself how to conduct its business. It was the public accounts committee this morning that passed this motion that is now in the hands of the government House leader.

Alf Apps himself said, when he appeared here last week, that 30 minutes with a witness is not nearly enough to get the job done.

We are now asking for expanded terms of reference. What possible reason could the government House leader have for not complying with the express will, first of all, of this Legislature in a vote, and second, of the express will of the public accounts committee by this motion this morning? What reason could he possibly have for denying that request?

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Free the truth. Free the truth.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke will come to order.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I know the member would never want to leave the impression that the committee does not have the power to call witnesses forward and to set the amount of time that they can hear from witnesses. In fact, it is my understanding that this afternoon the committee reorganized the number of witnesses, and in fact extended the time for one witness to hear it—that is within the administrative purview of the committee, as in all standing committees.

1100

The public accounts committee is doing an outstanding job. This morning, for example, they heard from one Kelly Mitchell, a very, very prominent Progressive Conservative, a very close friend of the leader of the Conservative Party, who himself apparently was paid \$400,000 to lobby and schmooze Conservative MPPs and, as we learned from the Toronto Star this morning, and I use their term, had "hired" Chris Mazza's girlfriend as a way of providing her with employment. There's lots coming out of this committee.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre. This morning, Mr. David Caplan, his former Minister of Health, called Ornge a rogue agency. Many other Liberal MPPs have used this term to describe Ornge. Does the Premier agree with that assessment?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. John Milloy: Again, I think that all members recognize the fact that the public accounts committee is currently seized with the Ornge matter. They've heard from a variety of witnesses already this morning, including the former Minister of Health, and there were opportunities for members of all sides of the House to pose questions.

In terms of the actions we've taken, Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General has given us good direction. The minister herself has taken a number of key actions. At the same time, we have a very important piece of legislation in front of this House, and if the opposition, to use the

Premier's words, were more interested in bills than bells, we could move forward and make sure that Ornge is on solid footing.

But as I say, we learned a great deal this morning, including from one Kelly Mitchell, a prominent Conservative, and the role that he played in many of the problems that we find at Ornge.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Back to the Premier, please. The McGuinty Liberals keep referring to Ornge as a rogue agency, but it seems to be a bit of a charming rogue with deep, deep pockets.

Don Guy has served the Premier as chief of staff, he has served him as campaign director, and he served him as trusted adviser for over a decade. Can the Premier explain how an agency can go rogue when it's working hand in hand with a key member of the Premier's team?

Hon. John Milloy: Again, if the member wants to conduct hearings on the floor of the Legislature, then let's talk a little bit more about Kelly Mitchell. Kelly Mitchell is a top Tim Hudak insider. He was hired by Ornge to lobby the PC Party. Worse, he received lucrative lobbying contracts while serving as a board member of Ornge and its for-profits.

According to this morning's Toronto Star, it reported that Kelly Mitchell "hired," to use their term, Chris Mazza's girlfriend in 2005 as his company began lobbying the PC Party. I think there are lots of questions to answer on that side of the House as to their involvement with Kelly Mitchell. We also know he was paid almost \$400,000 to lobby and schmooze the PC Party for Ornge and its for-profits. As I say, according to the Toronto Star, he hired Chris Mazza's girlfriend at a time when he was also Chris Mazza's lobbyist.

MIDWIFERY

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. There are approximately 145,000 births in Ontario each year, and midwives play an integral part in providing health care services to many of those giving birth. In fact, I know that four out of every 10 women who seek the services of a midwife are unable to obtain it. We need to make sure those who would like to access services offered by midwives are able to do so.

Through you, Speaker, to the minister: My constituents in Scarborough–Agincourt would like to know, what is the government doing to increase access to midwife services?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member for Scarborough–Agincourt for this very important question. Our government recognizes the enormous contribution that midwives make to our health care system and to the well-being of thousands of women and their newborn babies. In fact, we've got 580 midwives practising in Ontario, 78 midwifery practices. That's an increase of—we've doubled the number of midwives who are practising in this province.

They're providing services to approximately 18,000 women a year. I am proud to say that my daughter is one of those women. We're very proud of the work the midwives are doing.

Speaker, the number of midwives practising is expected to grow at about 15% per year. I want to assure them that our government is fully committed to supporting this growth in midwives.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Soo Wong: We have faced some tough economic times. We have a responsibility to Ontarians to ensure that they have the health care services they need. It is important for my constituents in Scarborough–Agincourt, indeed for all Ontarians, to have timely access to the care they need in the community, outside the hospital and in long-term care. Moreover, most importantly, every precious new dollar we put into the system must benefit the health of patients.

There are, I understand, alternative settings for giving birth, which would allow more routine procedures to be performed out of the hospital. Through you, Speaker, to the minister: What is this government doing to make these specialized services available to women in Ontario?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Part of our action plan for health care in Ontario is about moving routine procedures out of hospitals where those procedures can be performed with highest quality, lower cost and better patient outcomes than in hospitals, or as good patient outcomes as in hospitals.

Birthing is one of the leading causes of hospitalization for women in Ontario, even though there's no medical reason for the majority of women to have their babies in hospitals. That's why we're moving forward with birthing centres. They'll provide a more appropriate form of care, less expensive than hospitals, improve the birth experience and reduce the exposure of new health risks for both mother and baby.

By transferring routine, low-risk births to birthing centres, specialized obstetrical care and hospital capacity can be freed up for those women who need them.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Premier. The Premier has heard the exchange that we have had with his government House leader. We want to make this place work. We have put forward a very reasonable motion that was supported by the public accounts committee. This motion was vetted by the clerks of the Legislature. It is very much in order.

We are simply asking for this Legislature—for the government House leader—to bring forward this motion. Would he at least bring it forward for a vote so that we can deal with this? We too want to get on with the business of this Legislature. We're asking for only one thing, and that is to have the public accounts committee have this motion passed so that we can do the work that we believe we have to do on this file.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I'm pleased to take the question. I know the—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: There's Christopher Robin there.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: She's had 10 minutes to think of that, Speaker.

I think we should leave committee questions to the work of the committee but I can say that I do share the underlying desire on the part of the member opposite to move forward with government business. So I would ask, on behalf of Ontarians, why is it they've rung the bells some 13 times on our Accepting Schools Act; why have they rung the bells 10 times on our rent increase guideline bill; why have they rung them six times—

Interjections: Ornge. Ornge. Ornge.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I do not get quiet so that somebody else can interject.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I would suggest to my honourable colleagues in the official opposition that they consider that in the context of a minority government their responsibility is somewhat elevated. They have to find a way to do the people's business. Ontarians are concerned about what's happening in their schools, they're concerned about what's happening in our economy, they're concerned about what's happening on a number of fronts.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: I want to answer this question for the people of Ontario. The Premier asked why the ringing of the bells. It is because we are trying to get the government to agree to an express will of this Legislature and now to the express will of the public accounts committee to change the terms of reference of the public accounts committee so that we can do the business that we were sent here to do.

1110

I want to make this offer to the Premier, as I did to the government House leader. I can guarantee him that the bells will stop ringing as soon as they allow us to work under the terms of this motion. Will the Premier work with us? We'll stop the bells as soon as the Premier allows us to move forward on this motion.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. The comments as you're sitting are not helpful.

Premier.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. John Milloy: Everyone recognizes the concerns at Ornge. I remind members again that the Auditor General has looked into Ornge and produced a report going forward. The Ontario Provincial Police, at the encouragement of the Minister of Health, are investigating the Ornge situation.

Mr. Speaker, there's a very, very important piece of legislation in front of this House which responds to the Auditor General, as well as numerous pieces of legislation which they are blocking through bell-ringing. That bill, if passed for second reading, would be in front of a committee.

And finally, a standing committee of this Legislature—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Simcoe North, come to order.

Hon. John Milloy: —the public accounts committee, which has—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Oxford, come to order.

Hon. John Milloy: —all the powers and privileges of every committee—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds—Grenville, come to order.

Hon. John Milloy: —is looking into the Ornge situation.

Mr. Speaker, the member stands up and somehow seems to feel it's a powerless committee. The fact is, they can call any witness they want, and as we've seen today, they can hear that witness for any amount of time that they want.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I've just done it, but I'm going to identify individual members.

New question.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The question is to the Minister of Education. Every day, 1,500 of our students are bullied in schools here in Ontario. For months, the opposition and the government have been engaged in infighting on anti-bullying legislation, blocking each other's initiatives. When will the government and the opposition stop the infighting and get on with passing anti-bullying legislation.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm very pleased to have a chance to reiterate once again in this Legislature our willingness to make sure that Ontario has the strongest anti-bullying legislation possible.

When we introduced Bill 13, we brought it forward as part of a comprehensive strategy to eradicate bullying in our schools. We've talked about the fact that each and every one of us has a role to play. As legislators, we have a role to play too. I have a role to play as Minister of Education, and I have done that. I reached out across the aisle to Mrs. Witmer. I took the best of the ideas that were in Bill 14. I reiterated in this House that we continue to stand by that commitment. There are good ideas in Bill 14, and we will make sure that those are part of our comprehensive strategy.

What can the members on the other side of the House do, Speaker? They can vote for this bill and get it into committee.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: This government tries to portray itself as blameless, and the simple reality is that this government has rejected our initiatives to bring both bills together in committee, so that we can have the public hearings, so that we can have the debate and an anti-bullying bill. This government set things up so that we couldn't have the hearings on Bill 14. That would have moved forward the anti-bullying legislation. At the same time, our students are dealing with the bullying situation.

Minister, will your government, today, support putting both bills forward into committee so that we can actually get on with it?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister of Education.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Let's focus on the kids. When we focus on politics instead of the kids, kids lose out. So far, 13 times the bells have rung on Bill 13. Our shared job—all of us—let's support a time allocation bill, let's get this bill to committee, let's get it out of committee, and let's get supports in our schools for September. Let's listen to those like Jer's Vision and the GSA Coalition. Let's listen to their advice. Let's put kids first. Let's put politics aside, Speaker. Let's put kids first and get the supports in our schools this September. Kids are counting on us to be the grownups in this situation.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. New question.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Ms. Dipika Damerla: My question is for the Minister of Education. Minister, as you know, back in November—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew, come to order.

Ms. Dipika Damerla:—we introduced the Accepting Schools Act. The only goal of this act is to make our children safer in our schools, regardless of their background, their sexual orientation, creed, colour—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke is now warned.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prescott-Russell is not helping the matter at all.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And I don't need any help from you.

Member, continue.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Speaker, there's a real danger that this bill will not get passed this year because of the tactics and the obstructionist ways of the official opposition.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities will come to order.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: If these protections are not in place, the only people who will lose are our children. So my question to the minister is: What are we doing to ensure that we can pass this bill before schools reopen in September?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'd like to thank the member from Mississauga East-Cooksville. I'd like to assure the member and this entire House that on this side of the House we will do everything that we can to have this legislation in place and supports against bullying in our schools this September. But, Mr. Speaker, time is running out. There are less than five sitting weeks left in this session, and we've been talking about eradicating bullying in this House since November. During that time, the PC Party has delayed the second reading debate 13 times. On 13 separate occasions, they voted to obstruct legislation to help kids. We've had 19 hours of second reading debate. We've repeatedly said: Let's get this bill to committee; let's make it the best bill possible; let's pass a time allocation bill.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Thank you to the minister for that great answer. I'm really disappointed in the official opposition because they've chosen to block this legislation. On this side of the House, as you know, Speaker, we supported Bill 14, which is Elizabeth Witmer's bill. We supported this bill because we believe that anything we do to help kids is a step in the right direction. It's a shame that the official opposition doesn't share this view. Minister, I ask you: Is the official opposition showing good judgment by blocking this legislation that would help our kids?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Time and time again, we've heard the members of the Progressive Conservative Party say that they're ringing the bells and holding up the vital work of this House because they're mad about other issues. Their focus is on something else. The member for North York said that there were bigger issues than anti-bullying legislation, and 13 times the members have voted in favour of bell ringing instead of kids. Speaker, I say to the members opposite and to their leader: Our kids need your focus to be on them. They need you to put aside partisan politics and focus on them. During debate, the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke said, and perhaps he'll listen: "It is time to get down to the business of doing what is right for all children here in the province of Ontario and stop playing political games." I call on the opposition and their members to heed this advice. Put Ontario—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated. I would remind the minister and all members that when I say thank you, that should be the end. New question.

PATIENT TRANSFERS

Mr. Bill Walker: My question is for the Minister of Health. The Ornge scandal has brought to light several alarming issues. The corruption at Ornge squandered hundreds of millions of precious health care dollars and destroyed Ontarians' confidence in their air ambulance service and in their government. But Speaker, what's worse is that the Ornge scandal has compromised patient safety. Throughout the investigation, we've learned that the management at Ornge and the Ministry of Health showed an alarming disregard for patient safety.

Sadly, this issue doesn't stop at air ambulance services. Patient safety is also being compromised on the ground. Medical transport services in Ontario have been proven by the Ombudsman to be severely lacking in regulation and oversight. Can the minister explain why she hasn't taken action to protect patients who require medical transfers?

1120

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm assuming that the member opposite is referring to the non-urgent patient transfer issue that the Ombudsman has raised. I can sure the member opposite and members of this Legislature that we listened very carefully to the Ombudsman and my ministry, in co-operation with the Ministry of Transportation, is moving forward with looking at how we ought to regulate the non-urgent patients. This is an issue that I think deserves our attention and we are working on that solution, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Walker: Again to the Minister of Health: After receiving dozens of complaints, the Ombudsman launched an investigation into medical transport services in Ontario. His findings were extremely troubling. According to Mr. Marin, "Our investigation uncovered serious issues, from a lack of infection control to unsafe vehicles and poorly trained staff."

The CBC reported in June 2011 on several instances of patient deaths that occurred in medical transport vehicles. That same month, the Minister of Health and the Minister of Municipal Affairs promised to take action. Minister Matthews and Minister Wynne claimed that legislation would be introduced "at the earliest opportunity."

Minister, why have you neglected to address yet another pressing patient safety issue?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I completely reject the characterization. We are doing anything but neglecting.

This is an important issue. There are patients who are being transported by companies that offer non-urgent patient transportation. The issue the Ombudsman raised was that people thought they were cared for by paramedics when in fact they were not cared for by paramedics. They thought they were in an ambulance when in fact they were not in an ambulance.

It's an issue we take seriously. We are moving forward on the recommendations of the Ombudsman and I

look forward to returning to the House with more information.

JOB CREATION

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: To the Minister of Economic Development: Last week, Caterpillar announced \$60 billion in sales last year and a profit of \$7.1 billion. Despite those profits and a backlog for their products, they threw over 450 workers out of a job in London. There are only three words to describe this: greed, greed and more greed.

After Caterpillar closed, the minister was asked about the possible retaliatory measures the government could take. He said, "I've asked my ministry to take a look at are there any ... tools available to us in these circumstances." What tools did the minister find?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Our priority in southwestern Ontario is jobs and the tool that we're trying to give to the communities in southwestern Ontario is the southwestern Ontario development fund.

Now, I want to thank the critic from your party for working with us in committee in getting it through. He made some amendments, some that we don't support but some that we're willing to work with, because our first priority is jobs in southwestern Ontario.

But I say to the party opposite that it's time to get on with this bill. It's time to debate this bill in this House and this ringing of bells, Mr. Speaker, is slowing it down. Mayors across southwestern Ontario, people in southwestern Ontario want us to get on with this fund, want those dollars flowing into the community, creating jobs. We need to do that. We need to work together in this Legislature to get that bill passed.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: With nearly 25,000 people out of work in London, there's a lot for families in my community to be worried about. Meanwhile, their government isn't responding to those concerns. Instead, they've seen billions of dollars in handouts go to no-strings-attached corporate giveaways, a government virtually indifferent to Caterpillar's threat towards its workers and a recent budget that lacked a plan for jobs.

Why don't we see a job plan for this government capable of getting people back to work, like incentives that award companies for creating jobs?

Hon. Brad Duguid: We just talked about the southwestern Ontario development fund that we're trying to get through this Legislature. We need the help of the PC Party to do that because they're holding it up now. That's jobs, Mr. Speaker, and all of those jobs and all of those business support programs come with accountability mechanisms, despite what the NDP says.

If we were to not make those partnership agreements—Bombardier, the announcement the Premier made today about the Q400 planes being made here in Ontario—over \$1 billion of investment coming to Downsview, here in Ontario, would not have happened without the partnerships that the government of Ontario and the

government of Canada engaged in to keep Bombardier healthy here. We need to keep working to build the economy in southwestern Ontario. We need to keep working to build the auto sector out there. It's building and it's growing.

IMMIGRANTS

Mrs. Laura Albanese: My question is to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Our newcomer communities make important contributions to the fabric of our society, and in Ontario we know that diversity is our strength. My community of York South–Weston is fortunate to be home to a thriving multicultural community. York South–Weston is home to many vibrant and active cultural groups, including Somali, Italian, Portuguese, Vietnamese, South Asian and Spanish communities, to name a few. Members of our diverse communities offer their unique skills and knowledge, which play an important role in our economy. Skilled newcomers are in high demand with employers. What action is our government taking to ensure that our immigration mix meets the needs of Ontario employers?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I'd like to thank the member from York South–Weston for her leadership in helping new Canadians. Immigrants are a key to Ontario's future economic prosperity and growth. In the next five years, immigrants will account for all of Ontario's net market growth.

As members know, immigration is a shared responsibility with the federal government. But Ottawa continues to make unilateral decisions that affect our immigration mix and our economic recovery. That's why we need a made-in-Ontario immigration strategy. As a first step we've created the Expert Roundtable on Immigration to support our economic development while improving prospects for new immigrants. They will examine a range of immigration issues, including recruitment, selection, integration and retention.

Ontario remains the number one destination for newcomers to Canada, and we know that those who come to Ontario stay in Ontario—one more reason why Ontario needs its own immigration strategy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: My constituents will be very pleased to know that our government is taking action on this important issue. It's unfortunate that the federal government is not consulting with Ontario before taking actions that affect our immigration mix and our ability to help newcomers integrate into our economy. When you also consider that Ottawa refuses to negotiate a new immigration settlement agreement with Ontario—we are the only province that doesn't have one—it's clear that we must develop our own plan. Given the recent unilateral cuts that Ottawa has made to Ontario's settlement agencies, including agencies in my riding, it's important that we develop our strategy as soon as possible. Minister, what progress has been made since you first announced

your intention to create the new made-in-Ontario immigration strategy?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I share the member's enthusiasm and desire to put our strategy in action as soon as possible. I'm pleased to tell the member and those in the House that the round table held its first meeting on April 2. It was a very productive meeting, and I was very impressed with the discussion and the panel's eagerness and determination. I asked the Expert Roundtable on Immigration to provide their recommendations by the end of this summer. It's important that we continue to act quickly and decisively to help our skilled newcomers contribute to our economy. The panel's work will also inform our discussions with the federal government. We continue to urge the federal government to work with us on this shared responsibility to create an immigration system that works best for Canada and Ontario.

FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Minister, you've made some statements regarding the recent credit downgrades that almost make it look like a downgrade is a good thing. Perhaps I can give you another perspective. If we converted this year's deficit into \$100 bills, it would reach a height equivalent to 29 CN Towers stacked upon each other. Minister, will you stop the spin, take our ideas and get Ontario back on track?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: If we stretched the empty rhetoric one on top of another, it would reach to the moon and the stars, Mr. Speaker.

Get back to work. Quit ringing the bells. Help us pass the legislative agenda. You ought to be ashamed of yourself. You are not serving your constituents.

1130

Here's what they're blocking, Mr. Speaker. They're blocking help for seniors. They're blocking help for—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That was quick. Thank you.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: They're blocking help for bullied children, Mr. Speaker. They're blocking help for unemployed workers in your riding. They have no plan, no strategy. Their leader is a failure. The federal finance minister wants his job.

Get your act together. Build a better province. Support our efforts, and quit ringing the bells.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Back to the finance minister: If we did build a tower out of \$100 bills, at least the people of Ontario would have something to show for the billions of dollars you continue to waste.

The fact remains, a deficit that towers 29 times above the CN Tower is too much. Drummond told you that. We've told you that, Moody's has told you that, and now S&P is telling you that.

Your continued wasteful spending and all the hubris that goes along with it is disrespectful to the Ontario taxpayers. You talk about the achievability of your budget's assumptions. The problem is, with many of these assumptions and targets, such as negotiating a 0% increase in public sector wages, you have absolutely no record of delivering results and, therefore, no credibility.

Will you do the honourable thing? Will you look the taxpayer in the eye and tell them you've mismanaged their money and the current budget fails to rectify your mistake?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Order.

Answer.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: They revert to name calling and to yelling, Mr. Speaker, and here we are at the end of question period.

So the member opposite doesn't want us to build the Burlington hospital. He doesn't want us to build hospitals in his riding, Mr. Speaker. He wants us to subsidize horse racing. He doesn't want to have the House meeting. He disrespects taxpayers' dollars by spending more than \$300,000 an hour every time they ring the bells.

No, Mr. Speaker, the only thing flimsier than his logic is his record. They don't get it. Why don't you stop ringing the bells? Help us deal with bullied kids. Help us move forward with the seniors' tax credit. Help us build a better future for Ontario. Put aside your divisions, once and for—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. New question.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Premier. Speaker, for over a decade, the people of West Niagara and Stoney Creek have fought to rebuild the West Lincoln Memorial Hospital. These people have held fundraisers over 10 years, and they've raised over \$14 million in their community. They also are going along with a Liberal platform that committed to investing in new hospitals. This government, however, callously scrapped the project without any warning.

Speaker, the community has grown, but their hospital has not. Why are the Premier and his government turning their backs on their promise to the residents of West Niagara and Stoney Creek?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I can assure the member opposite that these were not decisions that were taken lightly. We know that communities are very supportive of their hospital.

I'm actually happy to have a question on this issue. I was surprised and disappointed that the MPP for that riding has not once raised the issue in the House. So it is good, actually, that a neighbouring MPP is raising that issue.

We have made unprecedented investments in hospital infrastructure. We will continue to make important investments for those communities. But we did have to make the decision to slow down the progress in light of the economic reality, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: I just want to let the minister know that the Lincoln hospital has over 900 births a year, the most in the Niagara Peninsula.

To the minister: A shovel was ready to go in the ground a week from now. Can you imagine the disappointment of that community in this government on their wrongful dismissal of this whole project?

Tonight, thousands of residents will gather at Grimsby Secondary School to demand that the Premier keep his promise. Their message is clear: Do the right thing. Stand behind years of Liberal promises. This project—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Durham will withdraw.

Mr. John O'Toole: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Finish.

Mr. Paul Miller: This project is not a luxury, Minister. It's an absolute necessity.

Will the Premier change his message for the thousands rallying tonight and tell them that he will rebuild the hospital that our expanding community so desperately needs?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We have moved aggressively on building new hospitals; 23 new hospitals are now under way, built or in planning. The Niagara Health System in St. Catharines is one of those hospitals, and I'm very much looking forward to visiting St. Catharines and seeing the progress on that hospital. It also involves a new cancer centre, so people in the Niagara region will be able to get the cancer care they need closer to home.

Again, Speaker, I'm disappointed that the member for Grimsby did not stand up—the Leader of the Opposition did not stand up—in support of this hospital, nor have the other members in the opposition. The member for Huron-Bruce, the member from Burlington and the member from Milton have not stood up to support their hospitals.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Bob Delaney: This question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Ontario faces a great challenge in this decade of both balancing the budget and ensuring that our province is prepared for a new knowledge-based economy to remain competitive.

A survey done by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business found many businesses face labour shortages. To fulfill these shortages, our institutions need to graduate six times as many college graduates as university graduates. Innovative partnerships between colleges and industry can help ensure that students graduate

in a field in demand. This way, companies can hire the right skills for their industry's needs.

Minister, what kind of success do Ontario college and university students have in finding a job after they graduate?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I want to thank my friend from Mississauga—Streetsville. We have incredible growth going on right now in the post-secondary sector. We have 210,000 more students. I often get asked, but at the end of the education process what is happening to them. Well, 96% of the 2005-06 university graduates got jobs within two years. Not only that, 85% of them got jobs in their field, which is quite remarkable.

In 2010, almost 83% of the 2009-10 college graduates were employed within six months. I want to repeat that: That's 83% of graduates in Ontario employed within six months, and it speaks well to our rapidly growing economy and our high skills economy.

STATUS OF BILL 14

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Nepean—Carleton, I suspect, on a point of order.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As you recognize, and all members of this House do, last week a valued and cherished colleague of everyone here decided to leave this place. She had a very important piece of legislation that was very important to me, as well as to a number of other people in our province, Bill 14.

Therefore, right now, I would like to move unanimous consent of the following motion: That the sponsorship of Bill 14 be reassigned to the member for Nepean—Carleton; and

That the question on the motion for second reading of Bill 13 be put forthwith, without further debate or amendment and with no deferral of the vote; and

If second reading is carried, Bill 13 be referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy and be taken up simultaneously with Bill 14 for public hearings and clause-by-clause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean—Carleton has asked for unanimous consent. Do we have unanimous consent?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have a no, so the unanimous consent is denied.

Hon. John Milloy: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order from the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: What the honourable member just tried to do, in my understanding, Mr. Speaker—and I look for guidance from the Chair—is that she would first have to seek unanimous consent to introduce a motion without notice. This is the first time that we have heard of this motion, and I don't know how she can expect us to respond to that. But I ask, Mr. Speaker: Is it not true that she would have to seek the unanimous consent of the House to entertain that motion?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's what I said. She was asking for unanimous consent; she was not asking for the motion. By denying unanimous consent, the motion couldn't be put to the floor.

This House is now—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Timmins—James Bay on a point of order.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: To the point of order and to the point that was made by the government House leader—and I just want to say this in all due respect: We've had this conversation as House leaders. It's well known that the offer has been put on the table in order to move in the way that has been put forward by Mrs. MacLeod. I know this because it was New Democrats who proposed that a long time ago and proposed it again yesterday. So the government knows. I would just urge the Premier to use this as a way forward, because clearly we all want to do the right thing here, and there's a way to do what is right for the children of Ontario, to move in the way that will stop the bell ringing and allow us to deal with this very important business.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I am going to listen to the points of order pertaining to this particular issue because I know that we have had some difficulties in coming to this consensus, so I will hear them out. After that, when I make my ruling, we will move forward.

The member from Simcoe—Grey.

Mr. Jim Wilson: As the honourable member from Timmins—James Bay just pointed out, this is the exact offer that we've been putting forward, so for the government House leader to pretend that this is the first time he has heard it simply is not factual. The fact of the matter is, what the honourable member from Nepean—Carleton is trying to do—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. I'll do that job. Thank you.

Mr. Jim Wilson: —is move forward, and what we're trying to do. We will give you Bill 13 right now, if you'd like, if you will resurrect Bill 14 in the name of Mrs. MacLeod and put both bills in committee.

Maybe people don't understand that for the minister to keep saying she's going to take chunks of Bill 14 and put it in 13 once 13 gets to committee—you cannot do substantive amendments like that without unanimous consent every time in committee. So why don't you give us unanimous consent now? Put both bills in committee, and let's have second reading and get on with it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On the same point of order—I will then provide an opportunity for a ruling. The government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, we have had discussions in a general nature with the opposition of how to move forward. This is the first time that I have ever heard the motion that was put forward.

We have made it very clear. Bill 14 is no longer an active bill on the order paper; the member has resigned. We have indicated our willingness to take chunks of Bill

14 and, during the amendment phase at second reading, to support the committee work that's going forward. That offer has been made since day one; in fact, the Minister of Education has provided the opposition with a list of the legal—she has gone to legislative counsel and put forward even ways that we could do it.

Mr. Speaker, we are very open to taking Bill 14, which is a matter of public record, but as members across the way know, with the resignation of Mrs. Witmer as a private member, it does not exist. On the motion here, that is the first time that I have heard that motion—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I have heard enough about what has been happening right now.

Let me be clear. I made a ruling on the request for unanimous consent. The dialogue that's presently happening with the points of order—the best place for that is with the House leaders. On a point of order, it's to presume that something is out of order. What I've heard here in this conversation is what I'm referring to the House leaders.

This House stands recessed until 3 this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1144 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Bill Walker: I have a school that's going to be attending here at 4 or 4:30 p.m. I don't know if they're going to be able to get into the gallery, but it will be Beavercrest Community School from my riding.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome. I'll take a moment to remind people that we really don't read from our BlackBerrys while we're speaking, but that's quite all right.

Mr. Bill Walker: I was trying to check to make sure I had the right name.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Forgiven.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MUSIC IN THE FIELDS

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to rise today to speak about the annual Lucknow Music in the Fields. This is a fantastic weekend of music and community spirit at its best.

This festival has been so successful that Music in the Fields is now extended to be held over two days, this year featuring Travis Tritt, Terri Clark, Doc Walker, Aaron Lines and Kira Isabella, just to name a few.

The two-day music festival is organized by the local Kinsmen Club of Lucknow, and it is a fantastic opportunity for music fans from all around southwestern Ontario and central Ontario to get together and see some of Canada's top country musicians perform in this great setting.

But the other side of the good news to this is that this is a not-for-profit initiative, and all the proceeds from this

program and this music festival will be going to various charitable and local organizations in the community, as well as to the Kinsmen's official charity, cystic fibrosis research.

Today, because of the endless fundraising by the Kinsmen, children and young adults with cystic fibrosis are often living well into their 30s and beyond. For almost every year of the 45 years the Kinsmen have been part of this partnership, an extra year of life for a CF child has been earned.

Music in the Fields past performers include superstar Blake Shelton, Jo Dee Messina and Canadian country stars like Paul Brandt, Jason McCoy, Johnny Reid, Emerson Drive, George Canyon and Beverly Mahood.

I encourage all country music fans to head to Lucknow on August 24 and 25 to take in what will be a great weekend of Music in the Fields.

PROTECTION OF PRIVACY

Ms. Cindy Forster: Regrettably, Ontario has become a province where too many see health care as a method to profit rather than placing the ethics of patients and their privacy as the priority. A recent sale of pharmacy records by Zellers (Hudson Bay) to Loblaw's (Zehrs) in a deal worth \$35 million has placed business interests and profits before the interests of people.

Corporations may view the users of pharmacies as nothing more than customers, but patients do not view this relationship the same as any other business. Patients should be able to decide up front who they trust to provide them with pharmacy services, not through some profitable deal struck in the backrooms of corporate offices.

Patients including Cheryl Edwards, one of my constituents, who entrusted their medical information to Zellers, were not consulted, nor were they informed, and they're just learning now that their pharmacy records have been sold. Health care providers, including pharmacists, are obligated to place patients' interests above their own, but this demonstrates that this principle can be undermined when profit is the motive.

Rather than defending their handling of eHealth or Ornge, this government should have been ensuring there were enough legislative safeguards ethically favouring Ontario's patients rather than profit.

THUNDER BAY SPORTOP QUEENS HOCKEY CLUB

Mr. Bill Mauro: Speaker, another incredible year has concluded for the Thunder Bay Sportop Midget AA Queens Hockey Club.

The roster, including Brianna Iazzolino, Azia Vass, Natasha Nicholl, Michela Cava, Kaitlyn Tougas, Michaela Coulter, Bronwyn Bolduc, Kaley Tienhaara, Jessie Schedlosky, Jillian Langtry, Samantha Strassburger, Jessica Gazzola, Farrah Nicholl, Michelle Carlson, Drue Ahola, Jayde Turcotte and Megan Leikkari, as well as

coaching staff Denis Lavoie, Dan Lavoie, Mitch Romano, Rick Evoy, Crystal Tustian and Steve Ballot, placed second, winning a silver medal at the Esso Cup Canadian National Female Midget Hockey Championship in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island.

Our midget Queens club had a remarkable 56-17-5 record this year, just two years removed from their national championship performance.

The Sportop midget AA Queen's club has added to and built upon the reputation of Thunder Bay being the best hockey community in the country. I offer my personal congratulations to the coaches, to the players, to the parents and the volunteers for your success on the ice and for representing our city of Thunder Bay to the broader hockey community. I wish all the players well as you pursue your goals and dreams. Thank you. You've made us all very proud once again.

NORTH STORMONT BROOMBALL TEAMS

Mr. Jim McDonell: This province's greatest treasure is our inspired, driven and enthusiastic youth who participate in community activities. In my riding of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry, youth sports are a key component of community life, and numerous teams compete in local, national and international leagues, with great results.

In mid-April, two broomball teams from the township of North Stormont—the men's Sting and the women's Eastern Thunder—returned from the 2012 Canadian Juvenile Broomball Championships with gold medals. It is no coincidence, as youth enrolment in sports activities in my riding is very high, and it fosters a healthy competitive spirit.

But the gold medals weren't the only awards that our girls and boys could be proud of. Among the personal achievements, I'd like to mention the following:

In the ladies division, from the Eastern Thunder: Janessa Byers, Canadian first all-star team; Lynn Duncan, Canadian second all-star team; and Steve Norman, overall coach of the year.

From the Seaway Valley Devils: coach Helena Lanthier, Canadian first all-star team.

In the men's division, from the Sting, we had Jacob Byers, second Canadian all-star team; Colby Hybregts, most valuable player in the gold medal game.

I just want to join North Stormont township in congratulating all the players for a spectacular showing and take this opportunity to say how proud we are of their achievements.

DEVELOPMENT IN TORONTO BEACH NEIGHBOURHOOD

Mr. Michael Prue: This afternoon, I rise in defence of the people of the Beach. What an iconic and wonderful community it is, one of the most recognizable neighbourhoods in all of Toronto, the place that has the best

shopping street of any place in the entire city and a jazz festival that is a world marvel.

But, you know, as the people of Toronto discover the Beach, so have the developers, and now that small retail strip going from Woodbine Avenue over to Scarborough is under assault. Where there is small retail, they're now saying there need to be six- and seven- and eight-storey condominiums. Where there were quaint cottages, they're now saying it's okay that they're all kept in shade.

Friends of Queen, the Waterfront Beach Community Association, the residents' groups and environmentalists are all trying their best to preserve this community. They have a universal fear of the developers, of their deep pockets, of their friends at the Ontario Municipal Board, and they also know that if they challenge them, they're going to possibly face great economic challenge. Friends of Glen Stewart Ravine, for instance, that took a developer to the Ontario Municipal Board, now owe \$60,000.

The city of Toronto has the authority to do something but has chosen not to do it. I am saying that it's time in this Legislature that we start looking at protecting our citizens and our neighbourhoods. We need to make municipalities more accountable. We also need to consider the abolition of the Ontario Municipal Board.

SCOTT JACKSON

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I would like to rise in the House today to recognize a young man from my riding of York-South Weston whose talent has won him a spot in the finals of the popular TV show Canada's Got Talent. Scott Jackson, the self-proclaimed human beat box, was born and raised in Weston and has spent nearly 10 years perfecting his beat box skills. Among Canada's best, he has represented our nation and our province at international beat boxing competitions, including the world beat box championship in Germany.

Scott has made a career out of his talent, performing at bar mitzvahs, corporate functions and in our schools. In the past few years, Scott has visited over 300 schools across Ontario. Using his unique talent as an opportunity to connect with youth of all ages, Scott discusses the importance of following your dreams and the value of equality and has given a strong voice to the anti-bullying message.

1510

I would like to congratulate Scott for his advancement to the finals and thank him for his hard work in the community. On behalf of myself and the excited residents of York South-Weston, I would like to wish him the best of luck on May 13.

JOSH CASSIDY

Mr. Bill Walker: I rise in the House today to recognize an exceptional young athlete who hails from the great riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. Josh Cassidy's winning time of 1 hour, 18 minutes and 25 seconds not

only clinched the Boston Marathon win in record time, but it also made Josh the fastest person in the world. He beat the world record by two seconds using nothing more and nothing less than his upper body force, his upper back and arms to hit the rings on his wheels.

As a double-leg amputee who was diagnosed with a rare childhood cancer called neuroblastoma, cancer in the spine and abdomen, just weeks after birth, Josh has always raced against challenges. Most recently, Josh, who is now 27 years old, has been racing to help save others' lives, such as five-year-old Niamh Curry as she fights neuroblastoma.

Josh is an inspiration for teaching us what it means to dream big and to reach higher goals and for his tenacity, strength and skill that are truly the tenets of the Canadian athlete's spirit. Our province and nation will watch with pride as Josh prepares to take on the world's best racers on the world's biggest stage at the summer Olympic Games in London.

I would like the House to join me in congratulating Josh Cassidy on his historic win in Boston and wishing him all the best at the London 2012 games.

MEMBERS OF PROVINCIAL PARLIAMENT

Mr. Bob Delaney: Ontarians watching their Legislature in action see the vibrance and diversity of our province on display.

Of the 107 Ontario members of provincial Parliament elected in 2011, 85 were born in North America, 82 of those in Canada and one each in Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago and the United States. Thirteen Ontario MPPs were born in Europe—four in Italy, three each in the Netherlands and the UK, and one each in Ireland, Germany and Portugal. Asia is the birthplace of nine Ontario MPPs—five from India, two from China and one each from Iran and Pakistan.

Fourteen different countries on three continents are the birthplaces of at least one Ontario MPP. Of the 82 Ontario MPPs born in Canada, 72 Ontario MPPs—two thirds of us—were born here in Ontario. Six of us are from Quebec and one each from New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Saskatchewan and Alberta.

Regardless of where we were born or raised or which part of Ontario elected us, Ontario's MPPs bring to the people's business both a local and a global perspective. Our contributions in this Legislature reflect the richness of our cultures, backgrounds and experiences. We and the people we represent are the competitive strength of our province because of our local roots and our global diversity.

CANADIAN TIRE MOTORSPORT PARK

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to rise today and make the announcement that Mosport International Raceway, in my riding of Durham, has teamed up with Canadian Tire in a new long-term partnership agreement.

In recognition of this partnership, the famous track at Mosport has been renamed the Canadian Tire Motorsport Park.

I also want to congratulate Myles Brandt, the president and general manager of Mosport raceway, as well as Allan MacDonald, who is a senior vice-president at Canadian Tire, who announced the partnership recently. It was a pleasure to work with Allan as well as Rob Nicol and Matthew Mackenzie. Congratulations also need to be extended to racing legend Ron Fellows, along with Alan Boughton and Carlo Fidani, who formed Canadian Motorsport Ventures and became the new owners of the parkway.

As racing fans will know, Mosport is home to some of the best and biggest racing events in Canada. It hosts the only Canadian stop in the North American Le Mans series. New for this year, Mosport will also play host to two exciting races in the 2012 NASCAR Canadian Tire series.

Mosport leads the way in racing innovation in Canada. The latest announcement will ensure a bright future.

Everyone is welcome to the Canadian Tire Motorsport Park at Mosport on Victoria Day weekend, May 18, 19 and 20, when the Trans Am America race series will be held. Everyone is welcome. It'll be a great weekend. I look forward to being there as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'll try to be there.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'd like to take a moment to introduce guests of mine, Jim and Shirley Gates, who are in the Speaker's gallery today as a result of their dedication to the United Way in purchasing a lunch with Dave this afternoon. Glad you're with us.

That's not a point of order, just to let everybody know.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ANTI-BULLYING ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR

LA LUTTE CONTRE L'INTIMIDATION

Ms. MacLeod moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 80, An Act to designate Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week in Schools and to provide for bullying prevention curricula, policies and administrative accountability in schools / Projet de loi 80, Loi désignant la Semaine de la sensibilisation à l'intimidation et de la prévention dans les écoles et prévoyant des programmes-cadres, des politiques et une responsabilité administrative à l'égard de la prévention de l'intimidation dans les écoles.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Many of you in this House will recall that this bill was previously Bill 14 under the name of Mrs. Witmer, the former member from Kitchener-Waterloo. You'll also recall, Mr. Speaker, that earlier today I requested unanimous consent for this bill to remain in committee under my name and that we move immediately for a vote on Bill 13.

This bill, however, designates the week beginning with the third Sunday in November in each year as Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week in schools. The bill also amends the Education Act to deal with bullying by pupils that occurs in schools. It covers bullying that occurs on a school site or public property within 50 metres of a school site during an activity conducted for a school purpose, through the use of technology provided to pupils by a school or through any technology if it affects the orderly operation of a school. A school board is required to provide instruction on bullying prevention, remedial programs for victims and perpetrators of bullying, professional development programs for teachers and information for the public.

The Minister of Education is required to develop a model bullying prevention plan to assist school boards. In turn, school boards are required to establish a bullying prevention plan. Teachers and other persons who work in a school are required to report to the principal acts of bullying that they observe in the school. If, after conducting an investigation, the principal believes an act of bullying has occurred, the principal is required to take the action specified in the bill and to submit an annual report to the school board on acts of bullying in the school. The board must forward the report to the minister, who is required to include a reference to it in the minister's annual report to the assembly.

Speaker, I also move that this bill be moved by unanimous consent back to the committee on social policy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Nepean-Carleton has asked for unanimous consent to move the bill immediately to committee. Do we agree? I hear a no.

INHERITED HEART RHYTHM
DISORDERS AWARENESS ACT, 2012
LOI DE 2012 SUR LA SENSIBILISATION
AUX TROUBLES DU RYTHME
CARDIAQUE HÉRÉDITAIRES

Mrs. McKenna moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 81, An Act to raise awareness about inherited heart rhythm disorders / Projet de loi 81, Loi visant à sensibiliser davantage le public aux troubles du rythme cardiaque héréditaires.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

1520

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I would like to thank my co-sponsors on this bill, the member from Oakville and the member from Hamilton Mountain.

The intention of this bill is to raise awareness of the warning symptoms of sudden cardiac arrest in children and youth. The sudden death of a completely healthy young person is devastating for the family and the community. We've learned from young people who have survived a cardiac event that in about half the cases, fainting during physical activity is clearly a warning sign that can be just weeks or months prior to sudden cardiac arrest.

The bill requires school boards and sport officials to call 911 in response to fainting during physical activity at a school or in an extracurricular activity. In 95% of cases it will merely be a faint, but where we find a genetic disorder we have saved a life.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES

MIDWIFERY

Hon. Deborah Matthews: In a few days, on May 5, we'll be celebrating International Day of the Midwife, and I would like to welcome the midwives to the Legislature this afternoon.

Since 1991, the International Day of the Midwife has provided an annual focal point for midwives around the world to raise awareness of midwifery and its contribution to maternal, newborn and reproductive health.

Earlier today, I was honoured to meet some of our dedicated midwives here at Queen's Park at the Association of Ontario Midwives reception. I was also honoured to meet some of the moms and dads and new babies who the midwives have cared for. I would like to take this opportunity to say thank you to the midwives, to thank them for the exceptional care they provide to Ontario women each and every day.

Our government is committed to supporting midwives and providing the highest standard of midwifery services. Over 580 midwives are registered to practise here in Ontario in 78 midwifery practice groups, and that number is expected to grow by about 15% annually as a result of our government's 2007 commitment to increase the number of midwifery education seats from 60 to 90.

The practice groups provided services to about 18,000 women in Ontario this past year. That means over 10% of births in Ontario were supported by midwives. While that is wonderful news, we want to do even more.

Our health care system is in the process of transformation. To explore ways to improve care and cut costs, the Premier announced in March that we would create provincially funded, free-standing birth centres. We want

to give Ontario moms more choice as to where to deliver their babies, especially for women with low-risk pregnancies. Right now, when it's time to give birth, the only choices that expectant mothers have are either hospitals or homes. We want to expand that choice for women, and that's why we're looking at giving families the option to give birth at birth centres led by midwives.

Today's tough economic times, a growing population and fewer obstetrical specialists demand innovation and creative solutions, and that's what Ontario's action plan for health care is all about. Through the action plan, we're committed to moving routine procedures out of hospitals and into specialized not-for-profit clinics when evidence shows that high-quality care and excellent patient outcomes can be achieved for better value.

Giving birth is a leading reason for the hospitalization of women in Ontario. However, there's no medical reason for the majority of women to be hospitalized for labour and birth. The establishment of birth centres also supports the Drummond report's recommendation to divert patients who do not need acute care from hospitals. Birth centres will provide a more appropriate form of care which is less expensive, improves the birth experience and reduces the exposure of new health risks for both mother and baby. And by transferring low-risk births to birth centres, specialized obstetrical care and hospital capacity can be freed up to focus on high-risk births.

Birth centres can be an excellent environment for moms in a non-institutional setting. They give women and their families more freedom to choose who will attend the birth, and it promotes person-centred care. Evidence shows that birth centres lead to fewer medical and surgical interventions at birth, and that benefits both moms and babies.

Ontario faces an aging obstetrical workforce with an increasing number of family physicians also leaving the practice of obstetrics. The Ministry of Finance projects an increase in Ontario's births to approximately 157,000 per year by 2024-25.

The care provided by midwives already benefits the health care system. They have a proven record of shorter lengths of hospital stay and lower readmission rates.

I want to say thank you to the Association of Ontario Midwives for its ongoing commitment to the health of women and babies and for working with us to give women greater choice in where they give birth.

JEWISH HERITAGE MONTH

Hon. Charles Sousa: Earlier this year, in a spirit of co-operation, the member for Parkdale-High Park and the member for Thornhill joined the member for Eglinton-Lawrence in sponsoring a private members' bill to designate May as Jewish Heritage Month in Ontario. This House voted unanimously in favour of the bill, and I'm proud to be the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration to inaugurate and mark what will now be an annual observance.

The story of the Jewish community is a story of Ontario. Now 200,000 strong, Jewish Canadians have been a vital part of our growth and prosperity since the 1800s. Jewish Canadians have excelled in business, culture, medicine, government, indeed all fields. Countless extraordinary individuals like Bora Laskin, Ed Mirvish, Barbara Frum, Rabbi Gunther Plaut and many more have had a hand in the great task of building Ontario. They have left an indelible imprint. In short, the Jewish community's success has been Ontario's success.

The Jewish people have had a proud and rich history and a rich heritage, and they have kept their important traditions alive.

Over the centuries, the Jewish people and their ideals have also been severely tested. Even Canada has not been immune to the maliciousness of discrimination and anti-Semitism. But despite these obstacles, Ontario's Jewish community has not only survived but thrived and its members have contributed greatly to our society.

This month, we celebrate the inspiring role of Jewish Canadians and the role they play in our province and we pledge to build on our shared achievements of the past. Working together, I know we'll secure an even brighter future for the next generations of Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Responses?

JEWISH HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Bill Walker: On behalf of the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus, it's an honour to join Ontario's Jewish community to celebrate Jewish Heritage Month. As a matter of fact, it was only a month or two ago that members of this Legislature spoke unanimously in favour of Bill 17, the piece of legislation that recognized May as Jewish Heritage Month.

It's no coincidence that we commemorate Jewish heritage, culture and contributions during the month of May. From Holocaust Remembrance Day, that day that forever reminds us to never forget, never again, to the symbolic Israel Independence Day, Ontarians now justifiably celebrate May as Jewish Heritage Month. Over 200,000 and growing, Ontario is proud to be home to the largest population of Jewish Canadians in the country.

Throughout Ontario's history, Jewish Canadians have shaped our economic landscape, contributed to our religious diversity, and strengthened our legacy of multiculturalism. Today the Jewish community continues to contribute to Ontario's rich cultural heritage and play a vital role in the development of Ontario's economic productivity.

This tradition of leadership is evidenced by the phenomenal contribution of individual Jewish Canadians to our province's prosperity, from doctors and researchers like Dr. Rena Buckstein, who's currently researching a cure for cancer, to artists like Celia Franca, who founded the National Ballet of Canada in 1951, and Barbara Frum, an institution in Canadian journalism.

There are few aspects of Canadian society that have not been shaped by the Jewish community.

Jewish Heritage Month also gives us the opportunity to recognize and appreciate the enormous charitable contributions individuals like Peter Munk and Seymour Schulich have made to both medicine and education, as well as Joseph Rotman's contributions to the arts and universities across the province.

Jewish Canadians have also had a very tangible impact on the development of vital provincial services. Right here in Toronto, the Jewish community's contribution can be seen in the historic Mount Sinai and Baycrest hospitals. University buildings across the province, from the University of Toronto to the University of Western Ontario, proudly bear the names of remarkable Jewish Canadians. These individuals embody not only a proud Jewish legacy, but values all Canadians cherish, like perseverance, professionalism, hard work and community service.

1530

On behalf of the Ontario PC caucus, I wish the Jewish community and all Ontarians our very best as you celebrate Jewish Heritage Month and continue to honour these valuable principles.

MIDWIFERY

Mr. Bill Walker: Speaker, I'm going to continue on a roll here. It is also my pleasure and privilege as today we join countries around the world to celebrate the International Day of the Midwife and recognize the vital work midwives do every day. Midwives deliver babies, midwives promote good health, and midwives are the unsung heroes of maternal and newborn health.

This important day is also a time to applaud the great strides that our midwives have made to establish themselves as a key promoter and champion of primary care to low-risk women throughout pregnancy, labour and birth. Just three decades ago, Ontario was one of the few western jurisdictions left behind, a province that hadn't recognized the practice of midwifery as a safe and integral part of health care.

So in 1986, our province began taking steps towards regulation, and finally, in 1994, Ontario became the first province in Canada to regulate midwifery. Since then, almost 130,000 babies have been born into the caring hands of midwives. At the reception lunch today, I held one of those lovely little babies who was delivered by midwifery.

This new choice of birthplace has also allowed 30,000 babies to be delivered in the community or at home. The choice of birthplace is an important one for women all across Ontario. Nowhere is family-centred, women-centred care more needed than in our small towns and remote communities. For too long, these neglected regions have experienced a shortage of maternity care providers such as family physicians, obstetricians and nurses, and traditionally women have had to leave their communities to give birth.

Just last year, 16,000 women chose to deliver with the help of midwives, representing over 10% of the births in Ontario.

This new choice has become so popular today that four out of 10 pregnant women looking for midwifery can't get it. This is something we need to address. Midwives are well-trained and deeply committed professionals. Their success and professionalism can be attributed to their model of care, namely:

- continuity of care;
- acting as primary care providers in stages of pregnancy, labour and up to six weeks postpartum;
- respecting women's right to choose where they give birth: home, hospital, and soon, birth centres;
- evidence-based practice; and
- judicious and appropriate use of medical technology that is allowing clients to be the final decision-makers.

Data shows that this vital profession provides an excellent alternative to the old hospital model. Not only are birth centres cost-effective, they divert women who have experienced a healthy, normal pregnancy away from hospitals. This frees up doctors and nurses in hospital emergency and labour and delivery centres for emergency interventions. In essence, a nurturing, safe and low-cost approach to birthing championed by midwifery is provided at a fraction of the cost. This, even though registered midwives hold a Bachelor of Midwifery degree and spend years studying and specializing in social and biomedical sciences and maternity health care.

So as we continue to look to protect vital services like health care, it's easy to make the case that midwives are well worth the investment. Indeed, midwives have a central role in ensuring the sustainability of our health care system.

While we can be proud that Canada has one of the lowest maternal-infant mortality rates in the world, the maternity care environment—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Members' responses?

MIDWIFERY

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would also like to congratulate all the midwives that made their way to Queen's Park and all the other ones busy at work on the International Day of Midwifery coming up on May 5.

This year, more than 16,000 women and their families will count on midwives as their primary care providers during and after birth. There are 85 midwifery clinics in Ontario. They provide care to 12% of pregnant women, and this will rise to 26% by 2020. This growth is welcome, especially given that four out of 10 women who want a midwife are not able to access one.

Families and women just love their midwives. This is the sentiment of every single family who has come in contact with midwives. They will express it to you. They just love them, and for good reason.

But a question must be asked, and a question that has been asked at the reception today is this, Mr. Speaker: Is

this feeling shared by the Ontario government? Is this feeling shared by the Minister of Health? And if so, how is this appreciation expressed? You see, Mr. Speaker, midwives have been getting mixed messages from this government. They praise them with their words, but they are missing in action when it comes to contract negotiation. Midwives have been working without a contract since March 31, 2011. Since May 2011, the government has refused to negotiate with them. This is over one full year, despite the fact that we have a report from an independent third party that shows that an immediate 20% increase is needed to bring midwives to the level of compensation that is expected, and that all of those women are working way below parity.

New Democrats have publicly supported a move to address the pay gap for this all-female profession. It is time to speak with action, not just with words.

JEWISH HERITAGE MONTH

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's my pleasure and privilege to rise on Jewish Heritage Month. It was a bill I was absolutely privileged to co-sign with the member from Eglinton—Lawrence and the member from Thornhill, and I want to thank them as well for being co-signatories to that bill.

I also want to give a shout-out to a 100-year-old shul in my neighbourhood, on Maria Street, that celebrated its anniversary. It's the oldest shul, where you see continuous services on high holidays—there's a little bit of contention for that role. We all celebrated there, and it was a joyous, joyous time. It's a beautiful synagogue. I certainly suggest that all members check it out. It's tucked on a little street, and it speaks to the heritage of the Jewish community in the city of Toronto.

I also want to send a shout-out to a friend from my childhood—I hope she's watching, I hope she hears it and I hope she gets in touch with me: Helen Bielawski.

When I grew up on Bedford Road, I went to Huron Street public school. Huron Street public school was mainly a Jewish school, and Spadina was a Jewish community. It has changed over the years. I grew up going to bat mitzvahs and bar mitzvahs with my friends, and it was a joyous time. What we didn't see, as children, of course, that the minister mentioned, were the darker times that preceded that, what brought them here in the first place.

I do remember seeing the grandmother of one of my friends at school with the numbers on her arm. I do remember my father's stories, as an immigrant, as well, talking about the times in Toronto when Jews were barred from clubs, from jobs, from universities and from places. That all happened within the span of two generations.

For now, it's enough to celebrate, and so I celebrate with this whole House. I celebrate the joys and the triumphs of the Jewish community in our community of Ontario.

I want to thank—another name from my riding—Francine Dick, who organizes a Seder supper every year

on Passover. There's not a large Jewish community in my riding, but she gets everyone out. We have people from all over the world that just arrived there, just to celebrate along with us.

To Francine; to all the members of the Maria Street synagogue; to all of those friends from my childhood who have helped make this province great; to Helen Bielawski—give me a shout—and to all of you: Mazel tov.

PETITIONS

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. John O'Toole: It's an honour to be first at this point of the proceedings to read a petition from my riding of Durham which reads as follows:

"Whereas citizens are concerned that contaminants in materials used as fill for pits and quarries may endanger water quality and the natural environment of the greenbelt," where I live, "and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment has a responsibility and a duty to protect the sensitive areas of the greenbelt and provincially sensitive wetlands; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has the lead responsibility to provide the tools to lower-tier governments to plan, protect and enforce clear, effective policies governing the application and permitting process for the placement of fill in abandoned pits and quarries; and

"Whereas this process requires clarification regarding rules respecting what materials may be used to rehabilitate or fill abandoned pits and quarries;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Minister of the Environment to initiate" immediately "a moratorium on the clean fill application and permit process on the greenbelt until there are clear rules; and we further ask that the provincial government take all necessary actions to protect our water and prevent contamination of the greenbelt, specifically" in the riding of Durham at Highway 2 in Newcastle and on Lakeridge Road.

I'm pleased to sign and support this and present it to Vincent, one of the pages here from Durham region.

1540

AIR-RAIL LINK

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further petitions? The member from Essex.

Mr. Jonah Schein: Davenport.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Davenport.

Mr. Jonah Schein: Thank you.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas diesel trains are a health hazard for people who live near them;

"Whereas more toxic fumes will be created by the 400 daily trains than the car trips they are meant to replace;

"Whereas the planned air-rail link does not serve the communities through which it passes and will be priced beyond the reach of most commuters;

"Whereas all major cities in the world with train service between their downtown core and the airport use electric trains;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario stop building the air-rail link for diesel and move to electrify the route immediately;

"That the air-rail link be designed, operated and priced as an affordable transportation option between all points along its route."

I support this petition, will affix my name to it and give it to page Manak to bring forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I apologize to the member for Davenport. I just got mixed up. You look alike.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I have a petition from residents of York South–Weston.

"Whereas St. John the Evangelist Catholic elementary school in Weston is overcrowded, with 480 students in a school designed for 260; and

"Whereas the students will be relocating 40 minutes away in September 2012 during the duration of the Metrolinx Weston tunnel construction; and

"Whereas the Toronto Catholic District School Board has placed St. John the Evangelist third on the urgent capital priority list for 2012;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Respectfully request full funding to replace St. John the Evangelist school during the Metrolinx Weston tunnel construction; therefore, the students are not relocated twice."

I agree with this petition. I will be signing it and sending it over with page Talin.

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Mr. Jeff Yurek: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Alzheimer's disease is a degenerative brain disease that causes thinking and memory impairment. Alzheimer's disease is progressive, worsens over time, and will eventually lead to death;

"Whereas there are an estimated 181,000 Ontarians diagnosed with Alzheimer's and related dementia today, and that number is set to increase by 40% in the next 10 years;

"Whereas Alzheimer's disease creates social, emotional and economic burdens on the family and friends of those suffering with the disease;

"Whereas the total economic burden of dementia in Ontario is expected to increase by more than \$770 million per year through to 2020;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to establish an Alzheimer's advisory council to advise the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on matters pertaining to strategy respecting research, treatment and the prevention of Alzheimer's and other related dementia."

I agree to this petition, and I affix my name to it.

LAKEHEAD UNIVERSITY BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas students are the cornerstone to colleges and universities; and

"Whereas students at universities and colleges have traditionally been allowed a voice and vote on all student-related matters on university and college governing bodies; and

"Whereas the Lakehead University board of governors has changed its bylaws to take away the voice and vote of Lakehead students on any issue that affects students at the board of governors meetings;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

"Reopen the Lakehead University Act, 1965, to enshrine student positions on any governing body of Lakehead University; and

"Condemn the actions of the Lakehead University board of governors in removing the voice and vote of students on any student-related issue that comes before the Lakehead University board of governors."

I affix my signature to this petition and give it to page Noah to deliver.

CELLULAR TRANSMISSION EQUIPMENT

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a petition signed by some members from my constituency. It says:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the operation of cellular commercial transmission equipment on new or existing cell towers has been proposed near residential areas in Oakville and other communities around the province;

"Whereas Industry Canada has ultimate authority to approve the location of cellular communications transmission equipment under the federal Radiocommunication Act; and

"Whereas the province of Ontario has no jurisdiction in the placement of cell communications equipment or services;

"Whereas many area residents and local elected officials have expressed concerns with the location due to its proximity to residential areas;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario request that the government of Canada review the siting of cellular commercial

communications transmission equipment in residential areas; and

"That the province of Ontario request that the government of Canada place a moratorium on the installation of cellular commercial communication transmission equipment on new or existing towers within 1,000 metres of residential homes until an improved separation distance is established by the federal government."

I agree with this, will sign it and send it down with Sarah.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I have a petition that's signed by thousands of people, addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario horse racing and breeding industry generates \$2 billion of economic activity, mostly in rural Ontario;

"Whereas more than 60,000 Ontarians are employed by Ontario's horse racing and breeding industry;

"Whereas 20% of the funds generated by the OLG slots-at-racetracks program is reinvested in racetracks and the horse racing and breeding industry, while 75% is returned to the government of Ontario;

"Whereas the OLG slots-at-racetracks program generates \$1.1 billion a year for health care and other spending, making it the most profitable form of gaming in the province for OLG;...

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Call on the government of Ontario to protect the \$1.1 billion of revenue the government received annually because of the OLG slots-at-racetracks program; direct OLG to honour the contracts with racetracks and protect the horse racing and breeding industry by continuing the OLG slots-at-racetracks revenue-sharing program."

I proudly sign my name to this petition.

TOURISM

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I have a petition which reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas tourism is a vital contributor to the economy of northwestern Ontario, bringing hundreds of millions of dollars into the province's economy from other provinces and the United States, unlike other regions in the province whose target demographic is people who already reside in Ontario;

"Whereas northwestern Ontario's tourist economy has been under attack by government policies such as the cancellation of the spring bear hunt, the harmonized sales tax (HST), the strong Canadian dollar and difficulties passing through the Canada/United States border; and

"Whereas studies have shown that tourism in the northwest nets significantly more money per stay than other regions of the province, in part due to visitors

frequenting historical sites, parks and roadside attractions that they learn about through travel information centres;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"To keep the travel information centres in Fort Frances, Kenora and Rainy River open permanently to ensure that northwestern Ontario maximizes the benefit of our tourist economy."

I support this and will give this to page Sarah to deliver.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I have another petition from residents of York South-Weston.

"Whereas St. John the Evangelist Catholic elementary school in Weston is overcrowded, with 480 students in a school designed for 260; and

"Whereas the students will be relocating 40 minutes away in September 2012 during the duration of the Metrolinx Weston tunnel construction; and

"Whereas the Toronto Catholic District School Board has placed St. John the Evangelist third on the urgent capital priority list for 2012;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Respectfully request full funding to replace St. John the Evangelist school during the Metrolinx Weston tunnel construction; therefore, the students are not relocated twice."

I will sign this petition and send it over with page Talin.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Jim McDonell: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas a report from Ontario's Auditor General on the province's air ambulance service, Ornge, found a web of questionable financial deals where tens of millions of taxpayers' dollars have been wasted and public safety compromised;

"Whereas Ornge officials created a 'mini-conglomerate' of more than a dozen private entities that enriched former senior officers and left taxpayers on the hook for \$300 million in debt;

"Whereas government funding for Ornge climbed 20% to \$700 million, while the number of patients airlifted actually declined by 6%;

"Whereas Ornge was paid \$7,700 per patient transported by land ambulance despite subcontracting this service for \$1,700 per patient, a full \$6,000 per patient less;

"Whereas, after receiving questions of serious concerns at Ornge from the opposition in 2010 and early 2011, the Minister of Health did not provide adequate oversight, ignored the red flags and reassured the Legislature that all was well; and

"Whereas, on March 21, 2012, the Legislature voted to create a special all-party select committee to investigate the scandals surrounding Ornge;

"Whereas such a committee provides protection from disciplinary action against employees who testify;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government of Ontario immediately appoint a special all-party select committee to investigate the scandals surrounding Ornge."

I support this, will be signing it and handing it off to page Safa.

1550

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Eglinton—Lawrence—oh, sorry, the member from Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that you always look down at where I stand, and you recognize me right away but, you know. All right, here I go with a petition from the people of Nickel Belt.

"Whereas strikes and lockouts are rare: on average, 97% of collective agreements are negotiated without work disruption; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers laws have existed in Quebec since 1978; in British Columbia since 1993; and successive governments in those two provinces have never repealed those laws; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers legislation has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes; and

"Whereas the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout is damaging to the social fabric of a community in the short and the long term as well as the well-being of its residents;

They "petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout."

I fully support this petition, Mr. Speaker—I thank you for recognizing me—will affix my name to it and ask page Constantine to take it to the Clerk.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Mike Colle: "Whereas Dufferin Street is in an important public transit route in the heart of the city of Toronto;

"Whereas hundreds of thousands of diesel bus trips are made up and down Dufferin 24-7, 365 days a year;

"Whereas there are thousands of people living in homes mere feet away from the diesel buses on Dufferin;

"Whereas constant exposure to diesel fumes is harmful to the health of the people who live on the side of the street on Dufferin;

"We, the undersigned, ask the provincial government to support the replacement of diesel buses on Dufferin,

replacing them with non-polluting transit vehicles generated electrically or with non-polluting fuels."

I totally support the removal of diesel buses from Dufferin, and I affix my signature to this petition.

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I have a petition that reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the price of gas is reaching historic price levels and is expected to increase another 15% in the near future, yet oil prices are dropping; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government has done nothing to protect consumers from high gas prices; and

"Whereas the high and unstable gas prices across Ontario have caused confusion and unfair hardship to Ontario drivers while also impacting the Ontario economy in key sectors such as tourism and transportation; and

"Whereas the high price of gas has a detrimental impact on all aspects of our already troubled economy and substantially increases the price of delivered commodities, adding further burden to Ontario consumers;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and urge the Premier to take action to protect consumers from the burden of high gas prices in Ontario."

I affix my signature in full support.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Michael Mantha: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers have been paying over millions in extra charges on their hydro bills to help retire the debt. The amount collected to date as per the Auditor General's report is \$8.7 billion, but the amount owing was \$7.8 billion;

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers are asking, where is the money being invested?

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers are asking why this was not addressed at the time the debt was paid;

"Whereas electrical rates have increased with the new creation of green energy coming online to include solar and wind, refurbishment of nuclear plants and deregulation of Hydro One;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows to obtain answers to the following questions:

"How much of the debt remains?

"When will it be eliminated from Ontario taxpayers' hydro bills?"

I agree with this petition. I present it to page Brady, who will take it down to the clerks. Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: This is a motion for time allocation on Bill 13. I move that, pursuant to standing order 47 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 13, An Act to amend the Education Act with respect to bullying and other matters, when the bill is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment and at such time the bill shall be ordered referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy; and

That the vote on second reading may be deferred pursuant to standing order 28(h); and

That the Standing Committee on Social Policy be authorized to meet in Toronto during its regular meeting times on Tuesday, May 8, Monday, May 14 and Tuesday, May 15, 2012, for the purpose of public hearings and during its regular meeting times on Monday, May 28 and Tuesday, May 29, 2012, for clause-by-clause consideration of the bill; and

That the committee shall be authorized to meet beyond the normal hour of adjournment for clause-by-clause consideration on Tuesday, May 29; and

That the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the clerk of the committee shall be 5 p.m. on Wednesday, May 23, 2012. At 5 p.m. on May 29, 2012, those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. Any division required shall be deferred until all remaining questions have been put and taken in succession with one 20-minute waiting period allowed pursuant to standing order 129(a); and

That the committee shall report the bill to the House no later than Wednesday, May 30, 2012. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on that day, the bill shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House; and

That, upon receiving the report of the Standing Committee on Social Policy, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order may be called on that same day; and

That, when the order for third reading of the bill is called, four hours shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill, apportioned equally among the recognized parties. At the end of this time, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

That the vote on third reading may be deferred pursuant to standing order 28(h); and

That in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Ms. Broten has moved government motion number 22.

Point of order?

Hon. John Milloy: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I believe you will find we have unanimous consent that the House recess for 15 minutes and the time during the recess accumulate toward the total time for debate, and the remaining time be divided equally among the three parties.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): That seems to be in order. We will do that. House is recessed for—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Is there unanimous consent? Yes? Seems to be. I thought it was a tri-party agreement.

The House stands recessed for 15 minutes.

The House recessed from 1558 to 1615.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I believe you will find unanimous consent to adjourn the present debate immediately; and that if this order is called at Orders of the Day tomorrow morning, the time to 10:15 a.m. will be split equally among the recognized parties, at which time the Speaker will immediately put the question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed.

Debate adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Orders of the day?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning. Thank you.

The House adjourned at 1616.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre de Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Craiton, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development and Innovation / Ministre du Développement économique et de l'Innovation
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Deputy Premier / Vice-premier ministre Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	

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Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Attorney General / Procureur général
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Milligan, Rob E. (PC)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Millroy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Piruzza, Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	
Vacant	Kitchener–Waterloo	

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Shafiq Qadri
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permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
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Gilles Bisson, Donna H. Cansfield
Steve Clark, Garfield Dunlop
Jeff Leal, Lisa MacLeod
Jonah Schein
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des comptes publics**

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Toby Barrett, France Gélinas
Phil McNeely, Norm Miller
Reza Moridi, Jerry J. Ouellette
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David Zimmer
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permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: John Vanthof
Michael Coteau, Grant Crack
Vic Dhillon, Randy Hillier
Rod Jackson, Mario Sergio
Peter Tabuns, John Vanthof
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ted Chudleigh
Ted Chudleigh, Dipika Damerla
Cheri DiNovo, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Ernie Hardeman, Tracy MacCharles
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Jane McKenna
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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of Debates
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Thursday 3 May 2012

Jeudi 3 mai 2012

Speaker
Honourable Dave LevacClerk
Deborah DellerPrésident
L'honorable Dave LevacGreffière
Deborah Deller

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Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 3 May 2012

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 3 mai 2012

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO ELECTRICITY SYSTEM OPERATOR ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LA SOCIÉTÉ D'EXPLOITATION DU RÉSEAU D'ÉLECTRICITÉ DE L'ONTARIO

Mr. Bentley moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 75, An Act to amend the Electricity Act, 1998 to amalgamate the Independent Electricity System Operator and the Ontario Power Authority, to amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 and to make complementary amendments to other Acts / *Projet de loi 75, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur l'électricité pour fusionner la Société indépendante d'exploitation du réseau d'électricité et l'Office de l'électricité de l'Ontario, modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario et apportant des modifications complémentaires à d'autres lois.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Debate? Minister of Energy.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Thank you, Speaker. I will be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the member from Richmond Hill.

I'm very pleased to be able to stand and speak to this bill. It's part of a journey that we've taken since we became the government in 2003, a journey to make sure that the people of Ontario have reliable, clean jobs supporting and producing affordable energy.

We know where we were. We know where we were in the years leading up to 2003. We know about the brownouts. We know about the shortages of electricity, of power. We know that we have been following a journey that saw the ability of Ontario to actually produce electricity go down but the demand of electricity consumers in Ontario go up, and that is not a good combination of directions. Our ability to produce, down; our demand, up—this can only mean what it produced: brownouts, shortages, diesel generators on street corners in communities—not a good foundation for a strong economy.

We also know that in the years leading up to 2003, Ontario became more and more reliant on coal, on energy produced from coal, on energy that relied on a technology that had been around for centuries. We all know that coal dirties the air. Dirty air makes people sick. Ontario had become increasingly reliant on that technology that ultimately made people sick.

So we started a journey that sought to remedy the direction Ontario had been going in, a journey that I'll speak to in a moment but a journey that has, as part of it, brought us to this bill, which is another step in the journey.

Those watching the proceedings might say, "What is the Independent Electricity System Operator and what is the Ontario Power Authority, and why are you putting them together?" I know that my colleague Reza Moridi, my parliamentary assistant, will get into this in much more detail, as well as telling more about the journey we've been on. But very simply, the Ontario Power Authority not only engages in long-term planning for the province, but it is also responsible for obtaining or procuring additional sources of power generation in the province and for managing those contracts; in the case of Ontario, many thousands of contracts now. That's their responsibility.

The Independent Electricity System Operator also engages in planning, beginning with the very short, minute-by-minute planning to make sure that we can match the demand of consumers for electricity with the electricity that's available—get it to the right place. They're responsible for dealing with either shortages, as they particularly had to in the years leading up to 2003, or, from time to time, when the weather is particularly good—surprisingly good and nobody is inside using power—the occasional surplus. They deal with that on a minute-to-minute basis.

So they've got a planning function as well as managing the market, because electricity moves within Ontario, between Ontario and other provinces and between Ontario and the United States and all the different states. Electricity moves by the second, and the IESO, or Independent Electricity System Operator, actually manages that.

The IESO was one of a number of agencies created when the old Ontario Hydro was broken up by the Tories, and the Ontario Power Authority was established to help us have a way of actually obtaining or procuring electricity—extra generation—when we needed it in 2003, 2004 and 2005.

So why put them together? Well, we see an opportunity now to take those planning functions that are in the

two different agencies and put them together. That strengthens the planning capacity of the province, because it puts it together in the same place. We also see an opportunity here to take out some back-office duplication and extra costs, and reduce the cost of running our electricity system. At the end of the day, what we're always trying to do is find ways to reduce the costs on families and businesses. We want reliable, we want clean, we want job-producing, but we also want to manage the costs. Taking costs out—costs that are great, costs that are small; we're looking at them all.

We understand that this amalgamation will reduce costs by about \$25 million a year. That's a significant amount of money for most families and businesses. Some might say that in the context of the overall electricity system it's not a huge amount of money. But I think \$25 million is a significant saving. If we can put \$25 million on top of other savings, we're going to see the effect on the bills of families and businesses. That's one of the things we're always trying to do: Find ways to take costs out of the system.

I also know that amalgamating agencies is something the New Democratic Party has particularly asked us to take a look at. They asked that in the context of the budget discussions we were having. They participated in those budget discussions. It was an important point that they raised. So we've taken this idea and listened very carefully, and we've come up with this bill to put these agencies together.

0910

Now, let's be very clear: There are a lot of other ways we're taking costs out of the system. We have, for example, reduced costs in our large, publicly owned agencies, Ontario Power Generation and Hydro One, already by almost half a billion dollars. But we're not satisfied with that; we're doing more. Remember, it's producing and delivering for the most reasonable cost—so half a billion dollars out already, and we're looking for more.

But we've not stopped there. We're placing both of those agencies on an international benchmarking exercise. What that really means is that we're going to compare our big agencies to similar agencies in other parts of the world to see whether we're doing it as effectively as we can—high quality, yes; clean and reliable, yes; but as effectively as we possibly can, and that means the most cost-effective.

But we're not stopping there. We've set up a panel, a group of three people—Murray Elston, David McFadden, Floyd Laughren—to take a look at the local distribution companies—there used to be over 300; there are now 78—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Can I ask you guys to take your discussion outside, please.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: —to see whether the number of companies is the most effective way to deliver electricity from the major transmission lines down to the families and businesses in local communities. That's what we're taking a look at, and we are continuing to look at ways to take costs out of the system.

This has, as I say, Speaker, been a journey, a journey to reduce the amount of power we get from coal to zero—we've reduced it by 90% already; we're at zero in 2014—to make sure we have enough power—brownouts in 2002-03; paying lots of money for imports in 2002-03.

We've brought on more generation. We've made sure that that generation is clean. We've launched a green energy and economy act, a jobs-producing act, which has nicely positioned us in Ontario to have a strong, clean, renewable sector in the province of Ontario to accelerate getting out of coal, produce great jobs in Ontario—20,000 already, on the way to 50,000—and has nicely positioned us for a substantial share of the clean-tech worldwide market. Clean technology is going to be about \$3 trillion by the year 2020, which is not that far off. We're nicely positioned to have a very substantial part of that and looking forward to the jobs it creates as we take advantage.

But you can't go and sell clean tech from Ontario to someone else if you're not using it yourself. The first thing they do is say, "Well, what are you doing?" We're doing it; we're practising it; we're leaders.

It has been a journey, and this bill is one more step on that journey of making sure we have clean, reliable, jobs-producing, jobs-supporting and affordable electricity right here in the province of Ontario.

Now I'm going to turn it over to my parliamentary assistant, because I know, given his background, he has a lot that he would like to add to this debate, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Richmond Hill.

Mr. Reza Moridi: It is my pleasure to rise in this House and to speak on Bill 75, An Act to amend the Electricity Act, 1998 to amalgamate the Independent Electricity System Operator and the Ontario Power Authority, to amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 and to make complementary amendments to other Acts.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin my remarks today on the state of Ontario's electricity sector and some of the recent changes made in this sector, as well as what we see as the opportunities for new economic development in the electricity sector in Ontario.

Ontario has always been the world leader and a pioneer in energy, whether it be the 19th-century birth of North America's petrochemical industry; Sir Adam Beck's creation of the world's first publicly owned electricity utility, harnessing the power of Niagara Falls; or the province's current role as a global leader in the emerging clean energy industry.

But first, here are some of the key numbers on the electricity sector in Ontario. You will note that the sector is undergoing significant change and experiencing exciting investment, development and renewal.

Ontario's electricity sector is a \$16-billion industry, employing 95,000 Ontarians in direct and indirect jobs. Ontario's electricity sector includes 5.1 million electricity customers and more than 3.3 million natural gas consumers in Ontario. More than 80% of the power generated in Ontario in 2011 came from emission-free sources

such as wind, hydroelectric and nuclear. This is 6% more than the Canadian average. We have some of the most aggressive conservation targets in North America.

Ontario is also home to the largest smart-meter rollout in North America, with 4.7 million smart meters already deployed. We will be the first globally to mandate time-of-use electricity prices for 100% of residential and small business customers by the end of this year, with 80% on time-of-use to date.

Mr. Speaker, let me go back to prior to 2003 and see where we were then. Under the Ontario PCs, our electricity system was in a state of crisis. Families and businesses didn't know if the lights would stay on when they flipped the switch. Mismanagement saw prices jump 30% in just seven months. Electricity demand had risen by 8%, but generating capacity fell by 6%. That is the equivalent of Niagara Falls running dry.

Ontario was forced to import expensive US electricity, costing Ontarians almost \$1 billion in 2002 and 2003 alone, and the PCs had to sign a multi-million-dollar contract to rent dirty diesel generators to keep the lights on in our downtown core, at a cost of \$2.80 per kilowatt hour, at a time when electricity was 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour.

PC experiments like deregulation and privatization of Ontario's electricity system resulted in massive, unpredictable price spikes, and the PCs had to slap the debt retirement charge on families' electricity bills to pay for their costly experiments. They added \$1 billion to the stranded debt and left future generations with a \$20-billion hole to fill.

They wilfully neglected our electricity transmission and distribution system. This meant that we needed to rebuild over 5,000 kilometres of transmission lines. That is like driving from Toronto to Whitehorse, Yukon.

Under the PCs, the use of dirty coal to produce electricity increased by 127%. The cost to human health and the environment of burning coal in Ontario power plants was more than \$3 billion per year. This resulted in 300 premature deaths and 150,000 illnesses, like asthma attacks, each year.

Now let us see what we have done since 2003. We have introduced new clean energy electricity generation sources to Ontario. This results in a \$13-billion investment in new generation since 2003 to tackle the shortfall in supply we inherited, with 9,000 megawatts of new, clean power for Ontario. That's about one fifth of our current supply.

Ontario will be completely coal-free by the end of 2014. This would be equivalent to taking up to seven million cars off Ontario's streets and roads—basically, almost all the cars in Ontario today. This is the single biggest climate-change initiative in North America, saving \$4.4 billion in avoided health and environmental costs to Ontarians. Ontario has shut down 10 of 19 coal-fired plants to date.

0920

Ontario now has the five largest wind farms in Canada. In 2003, Ontario had 15 megawatts of wind capacity. We now have about 2,000 megawatts of clean wind

power—enough power to meet the annual needs of more than 500,000 homes. The third-largest solar photovoltaic farm in the world is located in Sarnia: 18 megawatts of clean energy with \$400 million of private sector investment that created 800 construction jobs.

We have invested \$2.6 billion in hydroelectric expansions on the lower Mattagami River, with 800 jobs created. This is the largest hydroelectric power project in northern Ontario in 40 years, a unique project in partnership with the Moose Cree First Nation. The Niagara tunnel hydroelectric project, the largest construction project in Niagara region in 55 years, with over 400 jobs, is expected to produce enough electricity to power 160,000 homes for the next 100 years.

It would be difficult to cover all the facets of public policy change and economic investments that have occurred in the past eight years as a result of the McGuinty government's investment in the electricity sector. But I'm going to do my best to cover some of those achievements.

Over the past eight years more than \$13 billion has been invested in Ontario's power systems to tackle a shortfall in supply. Since 2003 we have added almost 9,000 megawatts of power, about 25% of our current generating capacity. That is roughly enough to power cities the size of Toronto and Ottawa combined.

About \$9 billion has been invested in Hydro One transmission and distribution lines. Improvements include upgrades to some 5,000 kilometres of power lines. The province is also making the shift to renewable power, and we are seeing evidence of new economic activity associated with that shift. Today, Ontario is Canada's leader in wind and solar power, and home to the largest operating wind and solar farms in the country.

Last year, more than 80% of the power generated in Ontario came from emission-free sources. We have also introduced some of the most aggressive conservation efforts in North America, encouraging energy efficiency through innovation programs, technology and education aimed at residential, business and industrial customers.

Finally, we are well on our way to meeting our goal to phase out coal by the end of 2014. Last year, for the first time, we got more of our electricity from solar and wind than from coal. The transformation of our electricity sector is bringing meaningful changes that include reduced pollution, reduced emissions, increased reliability and economic renewal. Our task is now to solidify and build on what we have achieved so far.

This transformation will require the private and public sectors to invest up to \$87 billion in the next 20 years. How can we leverage these investments and create economic benefits for the province and for Canada? I will speak to this opportunity more broadly in a minute, but let me first touch on what we have already done to stimulate investments in new, green jobs in Ontario.

We introduced a long-term energy plan that clearly lays out our plan for a clean, modern, reliable, sustainable energy future. In 2009, the Green Energy and Green Economy Act was enacted to expand renewable energy

generation, encourage energy conservation and promote the creation of clean energy jobs.

At the heart of the Green Energy Act, we established North America's most comprehensive feed-in tariff program, which sparked the development of renewable energy projects by offering guaranteed prices and long-term contracts to the developers of wind, water, solar and bio-sourced energy.

Since its launch in 2009, the FIT program has created a clean energy program of unmatched scope and turned Ontario into a clean energy leader in North America. To date, we have created more than 20,000 clean energy jobs and announced projects that will attract more than \$27 billion in private sector investment. We are currently on track to create up to 50,000 jobs, and more than 30 businesses have publicly indicated their intent to set up or expand their clean energy manufacturing plants here in Ontario.

We introduced a feed-in tariff program that attracted \$20 billion of private sector investment in green energy. That will create an estimated 20,000 direct and indirect jobs in places like Guelph, Windsor, Cambridge, London, Newmarket, Mississauga, Sault Ste. Marie and Oakville. The program has undergone its first scheduled two-year review.

The results of the review of the FIT program were announced by Minister Bentley on March 22. The review recommended that prices be adjusted to reflect lower costs and that other program adjustments be made to build on the success of the program. We are committed to implementing those recommendations.

Mr. Speaker, Ontario is moving ahead with its clean energy program, taking immediate steps to ensure the long-term sustainability of renewable energy while creating more jobs, lowering prices and giving communities a greater say.

Following the first review of Ontario's signature feed-in tariff program, the government will act quickly to implement all the recommendations, which will include:

- creating more jobs sooner by streamlining the regulatory approvals process for projects while maintaining the highest environmental protection standards;

- reducing prices for solar projects by more than 20%, on average, and for wind projects by approximately 15%, on average;

- encouraging greater community and aboriginal participation through a new priority point system, which will also prioritize projects with municipal support;

- reserving 10% of remaining capacity for projects with significant participation from local or aboriginal communities; and

- developing a clean energy economic development strategy to leverage Ontario's significant expertise and strengths to become a global leader in this sector.

Regular program reviews are a feature of FIT programs around the world. Ontarians were encouraged to participate in the review by answering an online survey or making a written submission by December 14, 2011. The review received more than 2,900 responses to our

online survey and more than 200 written submissions. The review also met with more than 80 stakeholders.

Now, there has been a lot of chatter on the FIT 2 review and the effect on ratepayers. New rules and prices balance the interests of ratepayers with the need to continue to invest in Ontario's clean energy economy. In order to support the sustainability of the program, prices will be examined annually to ensure they reflect current costs.

0930

Mr. Speaker, I want to touch briefly on the Samsung project. This project attracted a \$7-billion private sector investment in Ontario by Samsung. This project will build 2,500 megawatts of renewable energy. It will create 16,000 direct and indirect jobs in Ontario, and this will include the Siemens turbine blade plant in Tillsonburg, with 900 direct and indirect jobs; the CS Wind tower plant in Windsor, with 700 direct and indirect jobs; and the SMA Solar inverter plant in Toronto, with 100 direct and 100 indirect jobs.

We made a strategic investment for the province of Ontario to attract new jobs and opportunities in an everyday-changing industry. I want to take this time to give my honourable colleagues some more information on our investment in Ontario through the Korean consortium agreement. The Ontario government has negotiated an agreement with the Korean consortium, comprised of Samsung C&T Corp. and the Korea Electric Power Corp., KEPCO, which will lead to both energy generation and manufacturing facilities being constructed in Ontario. It's interesting, Mr. Speaker, to say that many years ago we exported two nuclear reactors to South Korea—we exported our nuclear technology to South Korea—and now South Koreans are bringing their solar and renewable energy technology to Ontario.

The agreement with Samsung stems from opportunities created for developers and investors through Ontario's Green Energy Act. This is expected to be among the first of many major investments to result from the leadership position Ontario has taken in Korean energy.

The consortium will be an anchor tenant in growing a new, vibrant green economy in Ontario. The province signed an agreement with the Korean consortium originally in January 2010, and amended it in the summer of 2011. This agreement allows for the creation of jobs and investments into Ontario's economy, and will create 16,000 direct and indirect jobs. Mr. Speaker, great progress has been made since the agreement has been signed, and the province improved the deal to better deliver results and provide even greater value for Ontario families.

Here's a brief chronology of the agreement with the Korean consortium: in the fall of 2008, KC approached the Ontario government; in the summer and fall of 2009, intensive negotiations between Ontario and the KC partners; January 2010, agreement signed; July 2011, agreement was amended by Ontario and the KC; August 2011, amendment and original agreement were made public.

What were the changes to the agreement in the summer of 2011? Under the amended agreement, in exchange

for the same one-year commercial operation date extension that was provided to all existing feed-in tariff contract holders in February 2011, the economic development adder payments to Samsung were reduced. If the maximum economic development adder is obtained, it means that the cost to average ratepayers in Ontario over the next 20 years will be about 36 cents a year. The amended agreement will also see four clean technology manufacturing plants open their doors earlier: three plants in December 2011 and one in August 2012.

It's also important to note that the Korean consortium is required to create a total of 900 jobs by the end of 2012. If a partner manufacturing plant closes prior to 2016, the economic development adder is reduced by 25%.

Samsung and three manufacturing partners, meaning Siemens, CS Wind and SMA, have had their facilities in commercial operation since December 2011. Siemens has built a wind blade manufacturing plant in Tillsonburg. Siemens expects the plant to create 300 jobs at peak capacity, and 600 indirect jobs. CS Wind has built a wind tower plant in Windsor. The plant is expected to employ up to 300 people when running at full capacity, and 400 indirect jobs are also expected with this plant.

Celestica and SMA are expanding the Celestica GTA facility to manufacture solar inverters. The plant is expected to create up to 100 direct jobs and 100 indirect jobs.

On September 8, 2011, KC announced that they have selected London, Ontario, for the site of a new solar module manufacturing facility. The manufacturing partner is still to be determined, and per the agreement it is expected to be operational by August 31, 2012. This plant is anticipated to create 200 direct manufacturing jobs and 120 indirect jobs. As per the amended agreement, KC will be eligible for an economic development adder, contingent upon meeting job commitments at these four manufacturing facilities.

I want also to take this opportunity to cover some misconceptions and inform this House of the First Nations involvement in the proposed green renewable energy park in Haldimand county.

The Minister of Energy is committed to the success of the green energy investment agreement. We will work with the Korean consortium and their developer partners where possible to help facilitate green energy projects. The Korean consortium and their partners have the responsibility to meet the requirements under the renewable energy approval process, including consultation with First Nations and the Métis communities. We take the crown's duty to consult First Nations and the Métis very seriously. As part of the consultation required under the renewable energy approval process, Samsung is consulting with the Six Nations elected council. We understand that business arrangements between Samsung and the Six Nations elected council are currently being negotiated. Six Nations launched a 30-day consultation period to discuss Samsung's projects and potential community involvement. The Six Nations elected council voted to move forward with the Grand Renewable Energy Project

in Haldimand county. Six Nations elected council and Samsung are negotiating final equity and capacity funding agreements.

Mayor Hewitt of Haldimand county is a strong supporter of the Samsung project. Actually, he has appeared in Samsung TV commercials, and Samsung, Pattern, NextEra and Capital Power helped launch the community vibrancy fund for the county on September 2011. This is a \$2-million-per-year fund for the 20-year life of the project.

The agreement will lead to approximately 16,000 green energy jobs over six years and bring \$7 billion of renewable energy investments to Ontario. Jobs will be created during the construction, installation and operation of renewable energy projects, as well as direct employment in manufacturing plants. In addition, the increased renewable energy development and the manufacturing activities will support indirect job creation in areas such as finance, consulting and other manufacturing, service and development industries.

Here are some of the key facts about our green energy initiatives:

- kick-starting our renewable manufacturing industry by bringing four green manufacturing projects and partners to Ontario, with an investment totalling \$7 billion;

- creating approximately 16,000 direct and indirect jobs over six years;

- generating approximately 110 million megawatt-hours of emissions-free electricity for the lifespan of the FIT contract—enough power to supply every home in Ontario for three years;

- displacing up to 40 megatonnes of carbon dioxide—equivalent to moving every single car off Ontario roads in one year; and

- creating even more economic development opportunities for aboriginal communities, municipalities, manufacturers, etc.

0940

Over the longer term, the additional manufacturing will deliver a very real contribution to Ontario's GDP, estimated at a net \$1 billion over 10 years.

The economic development adder is an incentive over and above the feed-in tariff paid for green energy generation. The EDA payments will be reduced on a pro rata basis if job levels fall below 85% of 900 jobs. Average jobs between 2013 and 2015 are to be maintained at 765 jobs. If jobs fall below 765 by 15%, KC's EDA will be reduced by 15%. If a manufacturing partner ceases operation before December 2016, the EDA will be reduced by 25%.

I would like to take a few moments to talk about our nuclear fleet. We are refurbishing Ontario's nuclear capacity. We'll create almost 25,000 jobs and generate annual economic activity of \$5 billion.

It would interest this House to know that we have conserved 1,700 megawatts of electricity since 2005. Investments in conservation of energy from 2006 to 2010 will result in \$3.8 billion in avoided system costs.

In 2011, the OPA launched the province-wide save-ONenergy electricity conservation program. According to the Canadian Energy Efficiency Alliance, we have improved Ontario's conservation rating from a C grade in 2004 to an A-plus grade in 2009.

We have introduced the industrial conservation initiative, which lowers costs for participating large businesses that shift consumption away from peak times.

We have brought forward the Energy Consumer Protection Act—tough new rules that greatly strengthen protections for consumers from unfair practices in the retail sector.

The Ontario energy and property tax credit has provided up to \$1,025 in tax relief for seniors. The Ontario clean energy benefit provides a 10% reduction in electricity bills for eligible Ontario families, with an estimated \$150-per-year saving for families, \$1,700 in savings per year for farmers and \$2,000 in savings per year for small businesses. The northern Ontario energy credit gives up to \$200 in tax relief for families in northern Ontario.

As of May 1, 2011, off-peak hours started two hours earlier, at 7 p.m. instead of 9 p.m., on weekdays. This provides an extra 10 hours a week during the lowest-cost period.

Mr. Speaker, we are modernizing our electricity grid for the 21st century. We have invested over \$9 billion since 2003 in improvements in Hydro One's systems, including upgrades to 5,000 kilometres of power lines, the distance from Toronto to Whitehorse, Yukon.

We have rolled out smart meters to Ontario homes and small business consumers on time and on budget, with over 4.7 million units installed already. As of February 1, 2012, approximately 3.6 million customers were on the time-of-use program. We have launched a \$50-million smart-grid fund to help advance smart-grid and economic development opportunities for Ontario's local distribution companies and businesses.

Ontario has a balanced and diversified portfolio of strengths with various sectors in the industry. As in the corporate world, only a diversified company with a balanced portfolio can use its strengths to truly capitalize on its growth opportunities. In particular, you will note Ontario's traditional strengths in nuclear, hydro power and natural gas, along with Ontario's more recent leadership in grid automation, data management and electric vehicles.

The smart grid is an adaptive, flexible and responsive 21st-century electricity system and the next logical step in Ontario's energy future. The smart grid is the digital way of the future. Think of it as modernizing our energy infrastructure, like going from the rotary dial phone to a smart phone, or as having the Internet applied to our electricity system, allowing real-time information to be used almost instantaneously to balance supply and demand at the retail level.

Smart grid development is an area with tremendous potential for economic growth in the electricity sector, but also in financing, technology, research and develop-

ment, building design, construction and manufacturing. Ontario is an early adopter. When it comes to smart grid technology, we are already ahead of our main competitors in the world. We currently have over 4.7 million installed smart meters in this province. But smart meters, our highly successful feed-in tariff program, and even the move toward electric vehicles are just the beginning.

The province is now home to many innovative companies researching developing ground-breaking smart grid technology and using it in their businesses. Ontario's Smart Grid Forum, a utility- and industry-led initiative focused on creating a road map for smart grid implementation, estimates that Ontario's electric utilities will invest approximately \$2 billion in smart grid technology over the next five years.

Actually, it's already started. In 2009, Hydro One, the province's largest electricity distributor, launched its Smart Zone initiative in Owen Sound. This project is focused on integrating various solutions in the areas of distributed generation, distribution automation and planning tools. The project has attracted international private sector planning tools, including system integration and project management services from IBM. In April 2011, Ontario launched a \$50-million smart grid fund to support innovative Ontario-based projects, advancing the smart grid and bringing a range of associated benefits to the province.

Mr. Speaker, by taking a leadership position in advancing the smart grid, Ontario is leveraging its current advantage to become a global leader in clean energy technology. We plan to be the test bed for new products and innovations, and the manufacturing base for them too. Globally, jurisdictions are moving towards incorporating renewable technologies into their energy mix. Ontario has the knowledge base and the expertise to help fill this demand.

Now I want to touch on the role of key organizations in our electricity system. I want to quickly give an overview of the various key organizations and players in the Ontario energy sector. The Ministry of Energy primarily provides policy direction and the framework; it also enacts the legislation and regulations to advance policy. The Ontario Energy Board is an independent, quasi-judicial board that regulates local distribution companies and sets distribution rates. Local distribution companies deliver electricity to consumers and plan, expand and manage distribution infrastructure. They are mostly municipally owned. Finally, the Electricity Distributors Association, which is actually celebrating its centennial in 2012, represents local distribution companies and is active in policy discussions.

0950

Let me say a few words about the Independent Electricity System Operator. The Independent Electricity System Operator, the province's electricity market operator, manages Ontario's electricity system and operates the wholesale electricity market. It forecasts the demand for electricity and ensures that there are available supplies to meet demand.

More than half of all electricity consumed by this province is paid for at wholesale prices. Most lower-use consumers, such as homeowners and small businesses, pay the regulated rate that is revised every six months based on market and contract prices paid to generators.

Generators offer electricity into the market at varying prices, depending on technology and fuel type.

The IESO dispatches the cheapest generators to the point where supply is sufficient to meet demand.

The Independent Electricity System Operator is responsible for maintaining the bulk electricity system reliability by balancing province-wide supplies and demand in real time; operating Ontario's electricity market and managing settlement and the billing for generators and load customers; and operating the metering data management and repository, a core part of the province's smart metering program that tracks information on time-of-use electricity consumption.

The MDM/R enables local distribution companies to bill consumers on time-of-use rates; assembles valuable data on consumer response to time-of-use prices to facilitate further research and policy development on conservation and demand management initiatives; periodically issues 18-month province-wide system reliability assessments; and conducts technical impact studies for proposed modifications to the bulk electricity system—for example, generator and load connections.

The Independent Electricity System Operator works in real time at the heart of Ontario's power system, connecting all participants: generators that produce electricity; transmitters that send it across the province; retailers that buy and sell it; industries and businesses that use it in large quantities; and local distribution companies that deliver electricity to the province and to people's homes.

Through research and policy development, the IESO also helps ensure that Ontario's electricity system and the markets continually evolve to adapt to changing economic conditions, evolving generation mixes and emerging policy priorities.

Let me say a few words about the IESO. Since its inception in 1999, the IESO has developed and implemented a broad range of rules, procedures and tools that allow the province's electricity system to function safely and reliably for the benefit of all Ontarians.

The IESO played a key role in managing the restoration of power following the August 2003 blackout that affected a large portion of the northeastern US and Canada.

On an ongoing basis, the IESO provides expert advice to the government and the Ontario Energy Board on a broad range of initiatives.

The IESO developed, implemented and is currently operating the metering data management repository, a core part of the province's smart metering program that tracks information on time-of-use electricity consumption.

Through prudent planning and effective communications, the IESO maintained system reliability through periods of extreme summer weather, including July 21,

2011, the day with the third-highest total energy consumption on record.

Recognizing the current economic climate, the IESO held its usage fee flat for the third consecutive year in 2011.

Let me say a few words about the OPA. The Ontario Power Authority is responsible for the following:

—medium- and long-term system planning; the procurement of generation supply; managing generation contracts; conservation programming; and aboriginal consultation and engagement.

The OPA plays a major role in executing the Ontario government's plan to transform Ontario's electricity system by helping to reduce Ontario's energy consumption and procuring clean, modern, cost-effective power to support sustainable electricity for the future of Ontarians.

Together with Ontario's local distribution companies, the OPA launched a suite of province-wide conservation programs to run from 2011-14 and has helped build the capability of delivery agents and customers to participate in conservation programs.

In 2011, the OPA continued to build on the success of the feed-in tariff and the microFIT programs by processing nearly 30,000 applications, awarding contracts and launching a planned two-year review of the programs. The OPA was selected as one of Canada's Greenest Employers in 2011. It was selected as Smart Commute Toronto-Central's 2011 employer of the year, and it was listed as one of greater Toronto's top 90 employers.

We are already leaders in innovation. Right here in Ontario, colleges and universities are producing the world's next generation of new-economy engineers and clean energy specialists. We are alert to the challenge—and the opportunity. Ontario is already halfway around the first lap while most jurisdictions are just coming out of the starting blocks.

So how do we all take advantage of this opportunity? How can we use Ontario's early adopter status to become a recognized global leader in the electricity sector, in energy supply, use and innovation? Ontario's energy system forms an essential part of our economy, and it is very important to every Ontarian. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Jeff Leal: No, just keep going a couple more minutes. You've got a couple more paragraphs there. Keep going.

Mr. Reza Moridi: Thank you, Ontario's energy system forms an essential part of the very foundation of our economic prosperity. We have proven our ability to provide innovative solutions to advance global clean energy objectives.

In 2010, investment in the global clean energy market—wind, solar and bioenergy—was nearly \$200 billion, and global investment in renewable energy projects is expected to mobilize nearly \$7 trillion of new capital over the next 20 years. I believe that Canada's next great economic opportunity is to capture global product mandates for clean energy technology and innovation. In other words, in addition to investing in new

ways to extract energy, we should be investing in the innovative use of energy.

The Canadian Council of Chief Executives has long acknowledged that Canada's natural resources in renewable energy like wind, tidal, biomass, geothermal and solar resources make us well positioned to be a clean energy leader.

Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Richmond Hill has moved adjournment of the debate. Agreed?

Second reading debate adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The debate has been adjourned. Orders of the day?

1000

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I seek unanimous consent to move the following motion without notice:

That when Bill 13, An Act to amend the Education Act with respect to bullying and other matters, is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of Bill 13 without further debate or amendment, and at such time, Bill 13 shall be ordered referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy; and

That the vote on second reading may be deferred pursuant to standing order 28(h); and

That Bill 14, the Anti-Bullying Act, 2012, the private member's bill sponsored by the former member from Kitchener–Waterloo, be reinstated at the Standing Committee on Social Policy—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member from Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You accidentally skipped the fourth paragraph.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm only on the third paragraph—oh, I'm sorry, Speaker. Yes, I did. Thank you, Gilles.

Let me start again, Speaker.

That when Bill 13, An Act to amend the Education Act with respect to bullying and other matters, is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of Bill 13 without further debate or amendment, and at such time, Bill 13 shall be ordered referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy; and

That the vote on second reading may be deferred pursuant to standing order 28(h); and

That Bill 14, the Anti-Bullying Act, 2012, the private member's bill sponsored by the former member—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order—

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Then I don't have the right copy.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Can I read that sentence for you?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Sure.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: With the indulgence of the House, I'll read that sentence.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Can I rise on a point of order?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister of Energy, point of order.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Thank you very much, Speaker. I'd like to stand on a point of order. I just want to make sure that all of the things are proceeding as they need to be proceeding and that we actually make sure that we're all at the same—are you ready now? I think my point of order has been addressed, so thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister of Education.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Thank you very much, Speaker. I'm very pleased to seek again unanimous consent to move the following motion without notice:

That when Bill 13, An Act to amend the Education Act with respect to bullying and other matters, is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of Bill 13 without further debate or amendment, and at such time, Bill 13 shall be ordered referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy; and

That the vote on second reading may be deferred pursuant to standing order 28(h); and

That Bill 14, the Anti-Bullying Act, 2012, the private member's bill sponsored by the former member from Kitchener–Waterloo, be reinstated at the Standing Committee on Social Policy at the same status it was as of April 26, 2012; and

That sponsorship of Bill 14 be transferred to the member from Nepean–Carleton in order to allow Bill 14 to receive public hearings simultaneously with Bill 13 and that its clauses be considered at the clause-by-clause stage of Bill 13 in accordance with the terms of this motion; and

That the committee be authorized to meet in Toronto during its regular meeting times on Monday, May 7; Tuesday, May 8; Monday, May 14; and Tuesday, May 15, 2012, for the purpose of conducting public hearings on Bill 13 and Bill 14; and

That the committee be authorized to meet beyond its normal meeting times on Monday, May 14, 2012, and Tuesday, May 15, 2012, for the purpose of conducting public hearings but must adjourn on both days no later than 8 p.m.; and

That the committee be authorized to sit on one day during the constituency week of May 21, 2012, through May 24, 2012, for the purpose of holding public hearings on Bill 13 and Bill 14 in Ottawa, Ontario; and

That the committee be authorized to meet in Toronto during its regular meeting times on Monday, May 28, and Tuesday, May 29, 2012, for clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 13; and

That the committee shall be authorized to meet beyond the normal hour of adjournment for clause-by-clause consideration on Tuesday, May 29; and

That during clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 13, the committee shall dedicate Monday, May 28, to considering which, if any, elements or clauses of Bill 14 should be incorporated into Bill 13, and that any remaining time on May 28 and all of May 29 shall be dedicated only to dealing with remaining clause-by-clause amendments to Bill 13; and

That the committee be authorized during clause-by-clause consideration to incorporate such provisions of Bill 14 into Bill 13 as the committee deems appropriate; and

That the filing deadline for filing amendments to Bill 13 with the clerk of the committee shall be 5 p.m. on Thursday, May 24, 2012. At 5 p.m. on May 29, 2012, those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of Bill 13 and any amendments thereto. Any division required shall be deferred until all remaining questions have been put and taken in succession, with one 20-minute waiting period allowed pursuant to standing order 129(a); and

That, despite the deadline for filing amendments, amendments that arise during discussions at committee on May 28 incorporating Bill 14 into Bill 13 may be introduced during the course of clause-by-clause hearings on that day, provided the amendment relates to the scope and principle of Bill 14; and

That, upon completion of clause-by-clause of Bill 13, the committee shall refer Bill 13, as amended, only back to the House to commence third reading debate on Bill 13, as amended; and

That the committee shall report Bill 13 to the House no later than Wednesday, May 30, 2012. In the event that the committee fails to report Bill 13 on that day, Bill 13, as amended, shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House; and

That, upon receiving the report of the committee, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith, and at such time, Bill 13, as amended, shall be ordered for third reading, which order may be called on that same day; and

That, when the order for third reading of Bill 13, as amended, is called, four hours shall be allotted to the third reading stage of Bill 13, as amended, apportioned equally among the recognized parties. At the end of this time, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of Bill 13, as amended, without further debate or amendment; and

That the vote on third reading may be deferred pursuant to standing order 28(h); and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on Bill 13, as amended, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Please sit.

You've all heard the motion from the Minister of Education. Shall the motion carry? The motion is carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Orders of the day.

ACCEPTING SCHOOLS ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 POUR DES ÉCOLES TOLÉRANTES

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 1, 2012, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 13, An Act to amend the Education Act with respect to bullying and other matters / Projet de loi 13, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation en ce qui a trait à l'intimidation et à d'autres questions.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to the order of the House just passed, I need to put the question on Bill 13.

Ms. Broten has moved second reading of Bill 13, An Act to amend the Education Act with respect to bullying and other matters.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

I heard a no.

All in favour, please say "aye."

All against, please say "nay."

I believe the ayes have it.

This vote will now be deferred until after question period.

Second reading vote deferred.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Orders of the day.

Hon. James J. Bradley: No further business, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: A point of order, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Nepean—Carleton on a point of order.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's not even a point of order, but please don't cut me off. I just want to say thank you to all members of this assembly. I'd like to point out my colleague Peter Tabuns for his great work in working with us, as well as the Minister of Education and other members here who feel very strongly about anti-bullying legislation.

A week ago tomorrow, my colleague from Kitchener-Waterloo decided to retire from this place, and I appreciate the opportunity to carry on what I think is a significant legacy of hers, an issue that she has fought for for many years, the anti-bullying legislation.

I have great gratitude for my members, from all parties, who want to see that flourish. Thank you all very much, and I really appreciate that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member knows that's not a point of order.

This House now stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1010 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'm pleased to welcome to the Ontario Legislature today Ms. Caroline Brendon, mother of page William Alexander from École L'Héritage in St. Catharines, as well as William's sister Caroline Alexander. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Phil McNeely: It's my pleasure to introduce in the east gallery today the mayor of all the people of Ottawa, Jim Watson, a former cabinet minister and MPP, of course, and his assistant, Serge Arpin.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'd like to welcome, from Community Living here today: Karen McNeille from Community Living Lindsay, Randy Netherton from People First, and Richard Semple from Community Living. I'd like to welcome them to Queen's Park today.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: On behalf of Minister Milloy, I would like to welcome some visitors to the Legislature today from Community Living Ontario. Visiting with us today is Deborah Rollier, the president; Garry Cooke, the past president, and his daughter Laurie; Theresa Somerton, a board member; Alan McWhorter, interim executive director; and Gordon Kyle, director of social policy and government relations. I'd like to welcome them to the Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the organization, I would like to advise everyone that there's a reception between 3:30 and 4:30 today in the dining room, and everyone is invited.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to welcome today the Community Living group from my riding of Durham: Mathew Ritchie with Colleen Arbuckle. There are a number of other people that I'd like to recognize, but when they show up, Mr. Speaker. I'll be introducing them during question period, perhaps.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Nice try.

The member from Windsor West.

Mrs. Teresa Piruzza: I'm pleased to introduce today some members from Community Living Windsor-Essex who are with us here today. We have Karen Charette, the director of Community Living supports and operations; Lisa Raffoul, manager of Community Living supports and also a founding member of Ensemble; and Jessica Martin. They're also here today for Community Living Day. Thank you for attending today, and welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I'd like to welcome to the Legislative Assembly Dalia Mukherjee, the mother of page Dia Mukherjee. I'm hoping that she'll enjoy watching her daughter in action this morning during question period.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'm pleased to introduce four special guests who've come to observe question period. They were here this morning for the clause-by-clause reading of Bill 2. I'm pleased to introduce Adina Lebo from CARP's downtown chapter, and she's the chair; Kevin McLean, who is the district D veterans service/seniors officer for the Royal Canadian Legion; Gail Simpson, who is the manager of professional develop-

ment and practice support for the Ontario Society of Occupational Therapists; and Vanessa Foran, who is the director of policy partnerships and government relations of the Parkinson Society Canada. I welcome them to the Ontario Legislature.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'd just like to echo the sentiments from the member from Windsor West and welcome members from Essex Community Living: Karen Charette, Lisa Raffoul and Jessica Martin. I'm really proud to welcome them here today, and I'm so proud of the work that you do in our community. Thank you so much.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I would like to introduce to the House today Mr. Ranjit Singh Dulai, who is the president and CEO of Petroleum Plus Inc. He'll be joining us shortly in the gallery. He has been very active in the community with youth and with the Malton action committee. Mr. Dulai has guests from the UK, very importantly from the border force of the United Kingdom, who are joining us: Mr. Manmohan Vij and Ms. Sukesh Vij.

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to introduce page Sabrina's school, that isn't quite here yet but will be shortly, and that's Jeff Mann, teacher, and the Muskoka Montessori School, which will be at Queen's Park today. I'd like to welcome them once they eventually get here.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We do welcome them.

Further introductions? There being none, it is now time for oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question to the Deputy Premier: Your government continues to put the interests of the Ontario Liberal Party ahead of the interests of Ontario families. In the face of a credit rating downgrade, you should have brought in more reductions in expenditures, but instead you've triggered a by-election. You signed a deal with the NDP that increased taxes and increased spending in trying to save your Liberal skin instead of doing the right thing. And the same thing is happening with hospital projects around this province, Mr. Speaker.

Last night I attended a rally with 10,000 folks in Grimsby, standing behind a good project at West Lincoln Memorial Hospital. But sadly, this is one of six projects cancelled by the Liberals, including South Bruce Grey, Wingham and District Hospital, Brockville General Hospital, St. Thomas Elgin, and Sunnybrook.

Can the deputy minister explain why he cancelled projects in PC ridings but is putting a \$1.2-billion megahospital into the city of Windsor? Why won't you do the right thing and move projects forward instead based on their merits and not—

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: It's nice that the Leader of the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The black knight of Ontario politics strikes again, Mr. Speaker. Where have you been? You haven't raised the issue for the last month. And by the way, this week we had to close racetracks that cost jobs in my riding, in the member for Windsor West's riding and in the member for Niagara Falls-Fort Erie's riding.

The budget is very fair. What is difficult to comprehend is: How can he tell us yesterday we need to cut spending and now today increase spending? You're trying to have it both ways; you can't have it both ways.

First you said we should adopt every one of Drummond's recommendations and you said not to cherry-pick; then you started to cherry-pick, one by one by one. No, Mr. Speaker. The people of Ontario see through it. He's been absent without leadership even in his own riding. It's—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Let's bring it down.

Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Minister, your budget is partisan pork-barrelling at its ugliest. You cancel five projects in PC-held ridings and now you're boasting about a \$1.2-billion mega-hospital in your own riding that was never on the list in the first place.

We support all efforts to rein in after nine years of their gluttonous spending spree that has put us into huge debt. But now they've got a brand new project in the Deputy Premier's own riding that miraculously appeared, a \$1.2-billion project.

Last night I stood proudly with the folks in Grimsby behind a good project for West Lincoln Memorial. We believe projects should be based on their merit. What will they do for health care—not for the political parties, not for the Ontario Liberal Party?

If it's true you're making decisions based on merit and not what riding they're in, will you table today the criteria you used to reject PC riding projects and to put your own on the top of the list of \$1.2 billion?

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Deputy Premier.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I know the Leader of the Opposition hasn't read the budget yet. He voted against it before he read it.

Let me just remind him now: The riding of Simcoe North, which I believe is represented by the Conservative Party—the leader may not know that—\$474 million for the Waypoint Centre for Mental Health Care. The Leader of the Opposition may not know this. You have a member from Barrie. That would be one of those people

back there—Mr. Jackson. The Royal Victoria Hospital: \$258 million.

1040

I had a little contretemps with your member from Cambridge who voted against the Cambridge hospital. You may not know it, but you have a member from Cambridge. He's got his Cambridge hospital redevelopment. His local newspaper told him he shouldn't follow your lead; he should vote for it.

You ought to learn who's in your caucus in the cities you represent—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Sit down. A reminder for all members that you are to use the—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A reminder for all members: You are to use the member's title or their riding.

Final supplementary: the member from Leeds-Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: This government is putting politics ahead of our province. The Premier continues to force unwanted industrial wind farms on PC ridings like Prince Edward-Hastings, Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, Lambton-Kent-Middlesex and Chatham-Kent-Essex, yet cancels wind projects in Liberal-held Scarborough—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will make sure that the question is relevant to the first two.

Mr. Steve Clark: Speaker, he racks up billion-dollar bills to cancel unpopular power projects in Liberal ridings like Oakville and Mississauga.

Minister, making billion-dollar decisions based on politics instead of merit is no way to run a government. It speaks to the Premier's utter incompetence and disregard for taxpayers. It's shameful. I join with my leader and ask you, Minister: Will you table in this House the criteria you use for which hospitals remained and which were cut?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Deputy Premier?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I did want to also go back to the Leader of the Opposition and say to the people of West Lincoln—here's what he had to say when asked about the West Lincoln hospital on budget day. He said, "I'm more interested in a balanced budget than any individual project."

Well, you know, you can't have it both ways. He's been absent without leadership. He takes one position one day and another position another day.

With respect to the final supplementary, I remind him that we have green energy jobs going on in Burlington, Cambridge—

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Tillsonburg.

Hon. Dwight Duncan:—Tillsonburg and a variety of others. Why do you want to close down those jobs in the member from Cambridge's riding and in the member from Burlington's riding?

You know what? We're about jobs, Mr. Speaker; they're about games. They've been absent without leadership. The people of Ontario demand leadership. They're getting it only from this side of the House.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Attorney General. AgustaWestland, the company that sold Ornge 12 helicopters for \$144 million and then kicked back \$6.7 million to Ornge in the form of a marketing agreement, is under investigation in Italy for a surprisingly similar deal.

Here is what was reported in the Italian media about the interrogation of the former director general of AgustaWestland's parent company: "The discussion focused on the bribes and kickbacks that it appears were paid by the public group's company responsible for helicopters—AgustaWestland—to win foreign sales."

My question to the Attorney General is this: Given the similarity between the Ornge deal and what is under investigation, will the Attorney General agree to refer this information to the OPP, the RCMP and the justice department of the United States of America?

Hon. John Gerretsen: I'm pleased to refer this to the Deputy Premier.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean—Carleton and the member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke will come to order.

Deputy Premier?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, my understanding is that the Ontario Provincial Police are investigating the situation at Ornge—all the events. We've had the Auditor General go through there. We have the public accounts committee looking very closely at all matters with respect to Ornge.

I think the last piece is the fact that that party opposite is obstructing Bill 50, which is designed to deal with the problems that the Minister of Health identified and dealt with in a very timely fashion. I hope that they will do what they've now done with two bills this morning and stop obstructing and let Bill 50 get passed.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: After yesterday's testimony from a former employee of Ornge who was responsible for the deliverables under that \$6.7-million kickback marketing agreement, it's interesting to note that the circumstances are uncannily the same as is being investigated in Italy. Ornge bought 12 helicopters from Agusta. India bought 12 helicopters from Agusta. According to Mr. Borgogni, the cost of the helicopters in India had been inflated in order to pay a multi-million-dollar kickback to the political party Lega Nord with the approval of Agusta-Westland's CEO. We have reason to believe that the Ornge deal is very similar in terms of the inflated price.

I ask the Attorney General again: Given the information that we have now conveyed to him, will he agree

to ensure that that is conveyed to the OPP, the RCMP and the US minister of justice?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Attorney General.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Come to order, please. The member from Durham and the member from Leeds—Grenville will stop.

Attorney General.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Thank you very much, Speaker. First of all, the member is fully aware of the fact that our legislative committee, public accounts, is looking into this issue. If issues come out of that that lead to further investigations by the police officials of this province, obviously that will be done.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Frank Klees: When will the ministers of the crown in this government start to put the public interest ahead of their political self-preservation?

If any member of the executive council is responsible to look beyond politics, it is the Attorney General. That is his responsibility. I have conveyed to him important information that I am asking him to ensure that the OPP investigation is familiar with. I'm asking him, because the deal was struck in Philadelphia, that he provide the same information to the US ministry of justice. I'm asking him to inform the RCMP because of their international jurisdiction. Will the Attorney General take on his responsibility and ensure that that information is conveyed to the appropriate enforcement agency?

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Attorney General.

Hon. John Gerretsen: First of all, we are very proud of our system of justice here.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I am going to refer to individuals, which I've already started to do. I will tell you that when I get the quiet, it's not the moment in which you start up again.

Attorney General.

Hon. John Gerretsen: First of all, I think we can all be very proud of our system of justice here in Canada and in Ontario on an ongoing basis. I'm very proud of the members who work in the Ministry of the Attorney General on a day-to-day basis.

As the member is fully aware, the OPP is already investigating all of the various allegations that have been made around Ornge, etc. With the information that the member has provided here—and it has become public—I'm quite sure that the OPP will do the right thing and investigate that as well.

We, as a government, do not direct our policing authorities as to what to investigate. They know their job. The member knows that. Let the OPP do the work that they are entitled to do on an ongoing basis on this issue as well.

JOB CREATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. Last October, the people of Ontario sent us here to focus on the issues that matter to them. They're worried about their jobs, the cost of everyday life and the state of their health care. They expect us to work together to get things done for them. This week, I've asked the government to look very seriously at New Democrat proposals, especially on jobs. Is the government ready to do that?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Oh, absolutely, and we welcome that commitment on the part of the third party. Unfortunately, the official opposition ruled themselves out of any discussion on these matters, preferring instead to be nominating candidates around the province, preferring instead to be obstructing important legislation.

1050

We, in the budget, as the leader of the third party will be aware, set up a jobs and prosperity task force. We are putting approximately \$2 billion together in a fund that they will give us advice on. We have already indicated our willingness to refer your ideas to that commission to look at. I know we'll be announcing the makeup of that commission in fairly short order.

I welcome those ideas and I welcome the opportunity to look carefully at them, to discuss them to see where we might find common ground.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Sadly, folks who were happy to see some real progress made last week saw more of the same old cynical politics when they tuned into Queen's Park this week: squabbles over process in legislation, even though we share a goal; political insiders making big bucks from the mess at Ornge; and desperate manoeuvres from a government to take back an absolute majority instead of working with the mandate that the people gave them not so long ago.

Is this government ready to roll up their sleeves and work on new ideas to create jobs that get people back to work, or are they completely—completely—determined to play the same old political games?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I'm pleased that the Legislature was able to get the bullying legislation into committee, working together with all parties. That's a very pleasant change of pace.

I am given to understand that in committee this morning, the official opposition has now officially backed down on their attempts to block Bill 2. There were a lot of members of CARP there, and the committee member from the official opposition ran upstairs to check things out with his leader, came back and said, "Okay, we're not going to block this anymore." Well done. We're glad to hear that.

We will continue to make this Legislature work. We will remain focused on health, on education and on jobs. The leader of the third party is absolutely right: That's extremely important.

Jobs are important. We're proud of the fact that we brought forward a number of initiatives in the budget. I

look forward to having the opportunity, in consultation with the jobs and prosperity task force, to look at further suggestions from the leader of the third party.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, these are very tough times in Ontario; I think everybody knows it. The people who get up every morning to make this province work want us to talk about the jobs that we can win for them, not the power that the government can win for itself.

Is this government ready to focus on the right priorities, roll up their sleeves and get to work on new ideas to create jobs to get people back to work in this province?

Interjection.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: As my colleague says, we're doing it each and every day, Mr. Speaker.

We look forward to hearing more about the leader of the third party's ideas on a job-creating tax credit. That certainly sounds promising, although we don't have the details yet from the leader.

This morning, the Premier was at Agfa HealthCare. More than 86 jobs were created there; 276 were retained. That's an important investment that we made. The third party often calls that corporate welfare. We don't think it's corporate welfare. The leader of the third party ought to be careful, because they criticize, on one hand, that we do this with businesses—and by the way, sometimes they're not successful; that's part of the risk you have to take—and then on the other hand says that she wants us to do more.

I'm looking forward to the specifics of your proposal so that we may have the opportunity—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

JOB CREATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Acting Premier. Yesterday, the Premier said that the jobs council would put our job creation tax credit on the table. Today, there are more than half a million Ontarians out of work. They're looking for work now. When can Ontarians expect to see that jobs council actually getting down to work on job creation in this province and on our tax credit—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Deputy Premier?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: As I've indicated, we expect that announcement very soon. But I don't want the leader of the third party to leave people with the impression that other good work isn't going on as we speak.

Last month, Ontario employment increased by 46,000 jobs, all full-time—more than half the jobs created in Canada. The CFIB cited an increase in small business confidence that shows that our confidence grew for the seventh month in a row. Statistics Canada: Ontario's GDP grew by 2% in 2011, led by a 2.4% increase in manufacturing. KPMG rates Ontario fourth in business costs among nine mature economic countries.

Mr. Speaker, there is more to do. There are too many Ontarians still looking for work. We will continue to

work every day to find those jobs, and I look forward to her proposals and her party's proposals with—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, wages in Ontario are stagnant, but the cost of living isn't. In fact, wages in Ontario are growing at the slowest rate in all of Canada. A job creation tax credit gives a bigger reward to companies that pay their employees better salaries.

Now, I might be incorrect, but I thought I heard the Acting Premier say that they agree that a job creation tax credit makes some good sense. Can I get that confirmed?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, what I haven't heard, for instance, in our discussions here, and I look forward to seeing absolute, concrete proposals from the NDP, instead of—for instance, would your tax credit be refundable? That's an important question.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Yes.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: So it would be refundable. We've now established that. How long would it apply for and what would the undertakings have to be?

We'd love to see more of this, because the member opposite knows that we have a number of refundable tax credits that are designed to create jobs that haven't, frankly, been as successful as we'd like. We welcome her input and her ideas, Mr. Speaker. Just send us over the information, if you want to do that now.

Is it refundable? What industries would it apply to? How much would it be? What would the impact of the fiscal plan be? All of those things. We look forward to discussing that, and we will take their proposals very seriously.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, a job creation tax credit to incent businesses to boost wages is part of Obama's 2013 budget plan. Is the Acting Premier going to look at the half-million unemployed people in this province, look at them straight in the eye, and admit that the Liberal plan isn't working but they're going to continue to offer more of the same? Or is the government finally going to step up to the plate, stop the games and start making some changes and making some new ideas implemented in this province?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, earlier this year myself and officials from the Ministry of Finance had an opportunity to meet with officials from the Obama administration. Much of what she's referring to is already in place in Ontario.

We need to get off of reading the headlines and just asking a question and start talking about the specific improvements. I welcome those ideas, but I would remind her that much of what she's spoken of in terms of what the Obama administration is doing is already in place in Ontario.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Minister of Health. For months now, the Minister of Health has

refused to be held accountable for her failed leadership. She has ducked and dodged and twisted herself up in knots trying to explain her failure and inaction. Her performance has been so weak that the mild-mannered House leader has been dispatched to clean up her mess and uncomfortably defend the indefensible.

But Speaker, he knows, as every other Liberal member knows, that Minister Matthews spent last August and September ignoring reports about scandal and corruption at Ornge, and chose instead to spend that time testing the waters for her upcoming leadership bid.

Given this, Speaker, I'd ask the Minister of Health if she's embarrassed by having to drag her cabinet colleagues in to clean up a mess that she has created.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I think that I'd turn to the Auditor General for advice on matters like this. The Auditor General has actually said that we have moved substantially and taken significant action to clean up the mess at Ornge. I'd be happy to review that, but I think if you went back and checked Hansard, I may have mentioned that before once or twice.

But you know, Speaker, a fundamental problem, I think, at Ornge, was that the board did not exercise the responsibility that was entrusted to them. One of the members of the board is someone named Kelly Mitchell. Now maybe we could talk about who Kelly Mitchell is, Speaker. I do think he resigned from the board immediately the story hit the front page. I think he was also absent without leadership in his role on the board at Ornge. He, of course, is a top fundraiser, a very close adviser—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's funny; she talks about private citizens but doesn't talk about her own role in this scandal.

Again to the minister: David Caplan walked the plank for his role in the eHealth scandal, the member for Eglinton—Lawrence was sacked for his fondness for cricket clubs and the Attorney General was demoted for his poor handling of the eco fees fiasco. Countless other Liberal backbenchers are sitting there, rotting away, while the Minister of Health stumbles her way through the biggest scandal in Ontario's history.

1100

While less-preferred members of the Liberal caucus were hung out to dry, this minister has been granted immunity. The Premier has ignored the fraud, concealment and kickbacks at Ornge. He's ignored the ineptitude and inexcusable failures on the part of this minister.

So I ask the minister: Have you looked your colleagues in the eye and justified your continued presence on this front bench, or are you prepared to do the right thing—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, my responsibility as Minister of Health is to clean up problems when I find them, and I did act aggressively: completely new leadership at Ornge.

But I think people might want to know about the old leadership at Ornge, the leadership that simply did not do their job. Kelly Mitchell is the former chief of staff to several PC Party ministers, including John Snobelen. He served as a board member for Ornge, but he also did some other work as—he's a co-founder of something called Picea Partners. He worked for PC leaders in leadership campaigns and billed a rather remarkable \$176,000 to the PC Party in 2011. So this guy was busy, but I don't think he should have been too busy to be exercising his responsibility on the board of directors at Ornge.

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Minister of Labour. Minister, media reports have indicated that the recently appointed chair of the WSIB is making a compensation package of roughly \$188,000 a year. Can the minister verify that this compensation package is accurate?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: Mr. Speaker, I'm really pleased to take this question, because the WSIB is responsible for delivering services to over 230,000 employers and over four million workers across Ontario. It's a very serious responsibility, and the former Minister of Labour, Minister of Health and Deputy Premier, Elizabeth Witmer, is very exceptionally well-qualified to be the chair of the WSIB. I'm really pleased about that.

I want to remind the House that over the last three decades, other governments of all stripes had difficulties with this file, and the WSIB has seen their unfunded liability go up. A few years ago, that financial crisis came to a head and it became more apparent.

Since the release of the Auditor General's report in 2009, the WSIB has worked very hard to improve its financial sustainability. This includes posting a surplus last year, for the first time in a decade.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: The last WSIB chair didn't make the sunshine list and was only a part-time employee. We understand the government is giving Elizabeth Witmer \$188,000 a year to be the WSIB chair, and it has suddenly been made a full-time position.

Can the minister explain why the WSIB chair has suddenly become a full-time gig and why the pay has gone up as well?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I think this sounds more like an election stump than worrying about injured workers. We have a very serious task here, and we want to make sure that we have a strong chair, because they need to bring strong leadership to the WSIB board. They need to work to eliminate the unfunded liability. They need to help injured workers and reduce tape for business.

Our government has already begun steps to address the unfunded liability, including asking Professor Harry Arthurs to conduct a comprehensive funding review of the system.

I look forward to working with the new chair of WSIB to retire that unfunded liability, to protect injured workers and to ensure that the WSIB operates in a businesslike fashion. I want to thank Steve Mahoney for his dedicated service and commitment to the chair of the WSIB over the last six years.

ORGAN DONATION

Mr. Bob Delaney: This question is for the Minister of Government Services. Many Ontarians have loved ones requiring an organ to save their life. Every day, hundreds of Ontarians wait for the gift of life. One of them is Fatima Baig, a young woman who lives in the Middlebury area of Mississauga–Erindale and needs a liver donor.

There were 946 organ transplants in Ontario last year. The number of yearly organ transplants in Ontario has grown by 53% since—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member of Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, come to order.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Organ donation registration is a critical part of our world-leading health system, and we need to attract more Ontarians to register as an organ donor.

Minister, how is ServiceOntario meeting this challenge and improving our organ donation system?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I want to thank the member from Mississauga–Streetsville for asking this question. Every donor who provides donations of organs and tissue can save up to eight lives. So our government is absolutely committed to helping people like Fatima Baig to get the gift of life.

Our government is already asking all people who are coming to renew their health cards for donor donations. So I am very pleased to announce today that we are expanding the organ donor registration request to those who renew their driver's licence and photo ID cards as well.

We have already rolled this out in four locations and will be expanding to 91 locations of ServiceOntario very shortly, with the remaining over 200 locations added next year—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Minister, when an individual registers to be an organ donor, they can help save the life of someone like Fatima Baig. I know Fatima Baig, and I know her family. She's a young woman who's a teenager, and she's a good student.

Ontario is one of only a few provinces with organ donation registries. However, 1,500 people like Fatima Baig still wait for an organ in Ontario. Only 21% of Ontarians have registered to be an organ donor. People like Fatima will surely die unless more Ontarians register to be organ donors.

This initiative at ServiceOntario is one measure of an integrated strategy to increase organ donation registrations. We need to do more to encourage Ontarians to register as organ donors.

Minister, what else is Ontario doing, in partnership with the Trillium Gift of Life, to increase organ donor registrations?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: To the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The reality is that every three days someone in Ontario dies waiting for an organ transplant. We can do better. We must do better. That's why I'm very pleased the Trillium Gift of Life has launched their beadonor.ca campaign. That has dramatically increased the number of people who are registering to be a donor.

In addition, they've launched the Gift of 8 campaign, and I am very pleased that I personally have got a page on that Gift of 8 campaign. I encourage all members of this House to register a page and challenge their community to do better. Last year, 280,000 people gave their consent to donate. That's an increase of 110,000 people over the last year. We must do better for people like Fatima.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is for the Deputy Premier. The corruption at Ornge and lack of accountability in the Liberal cabinet have revealed much about the character of this government. It's evident that Ontarians are governed by a party, a Premier and a cabinet whose sense of entitlement colours every decision they make. Surely this sense of entitlement is driving the complete and utter failure of the Liberal government to take responsibility for the corruption and hold the appropriate people accountable.

I'm troubled by the government's refusal to demonstrate that decisions have consequences and that accountability is a fundamental principle in ensuring public confidence in government.

So I ask the minister: Why has no one in the Liberal government been held accountable for corruption at Ornge?

1110

Hon. Dwight Duncan: It's unfortunate that the Conservatives have repeatedly tried to undermine the public accounts committee. In fact, we've now had 20 hours of hearings with 28 witnesses. I've had the opportunity to watch them on television, and it's astounding what we've been able to determine. Kelly Mitchell: over \$17,000 in donations made from him and his companies; 15 PCs benefited, including the member for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock.

Boy, oh boy. Now, she's making faces, Mr. Speaker, and I don't blame her, because she's been absent without leadership. She can toss over drive-by smears, but when we start to look at this, we look at Lynne Golding, we look at Guy Giorno, Kelly Mitchell, Kelly Long—the

fingers of this creep into that caucus even more deeply than the scent that's coming from Ottawa.

You know what—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Laurie Scott: Again to the minister: He is setting the example to the extent of the decay that has set in in that Liberal government. It's troubling to see that a government has become so detached from the obligations and responsibilities bestowed upon it by Ontarians. This government's sense of entitlement is destroying any credibility it once had. The Minister of Finance knows what he's doing is wrong. He knows that by defending the Minister of Health, he's undermining his personal integrity. He knows that the Minister of Health should have resigned months ago, that her excuses have been less than truthful and that she is undermining public confidence in our system of government.

So I ask the minister again: Why is he protecting the Minister of Health, and why is he so willing to compromise his personal—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question.

Ms. Laurie Scott: —for political gain?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Deputy Premier.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Kelly Mitchell was paid \$400,000 to lobby and schmooze the PC Party for Ornge and for its profits. Among the riding associations that benefited from his lobbying contracts was Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock.

I really think the party opposite should stop obstructing the committee and let it do its work. Let's find out how many other Tories have been at the trough on this one.

The Minister of Health has done an outstanding job in, first of all, addressing the problem—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Durham is now warned.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And I have tried to make it clear that when I do get attention, I don't need these extra shots when it's quiet.

Finish your answer, please.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: If the member is that serious, stop blocking Bill 50. Let us fix the mess that people like Kelly Mitchell and your riding association benefited from. They can't have it both ways. They've been absent without leadership. Let Bill 50 pass. Let's get this fixed once and for all.

Interjections.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: They can yell and call names and not do the work of the people; we will.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Minister of Energy. This morning, we started a debate on your Bill

75, merging two hydro agencies. Minister, on the verge of decisions to take a risky gamble to spend billions on new nuclear reactors, why is it that your bill is shutting down full public assessment of those decisions?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: It's doing no such thing—doing no such thing at all.

As the member opposite would know, any large power facility in the province of Ontario will have a very, very robust environmental assessment process which, in the case of the Darlington site, has actually been going on since 2006, but, in addition, for any nuclear facility in the province of Ontario, there is a very robust process conducted by the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission itself, which provides a report on safety and related issues.

The bill that was tabled today strengthens planning overall, takes out cost, but does none of the things suggested in the member's question.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The reality is that this government consistently acts to shut down public scrutiny.

In 2006, the environmental assessment that should have been brought forward for the power plant was set aside by this government. In the Darlington review panel, this government urged that panel not to consider any alternatives to what was put forward. Now, in this bill, you're further limiting the ability of the public to get in there and assess what's going on. Why are you afraid of scrutiny, Minister?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Just reminding all of us and for the information of those at home, nuclear siting is the jurisdiction of the federal government, which has the most robust environmental assessment on these issues anywhere, and there's a safety assessment. Nothing the Legislature of Ontario passes can get in the way or hinder in any way the federal regulatory oversight process. In fact, those involved in our atomic energy facilities in the province of Ontario—Tom Mitchell, Duncan Hawthorne—were leaders in the world effort to deal with issues in Fukushima. We have the leaders here, the strongest regulation anywhere.

The member opposite should not run down the very strong nuclear industry in the province of Ontario and the 80,000 jobs that go with it.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Ms. Helena Jaczek: My question is also for the Minister of Energy. I've heard that Ontario's clean energy economy is employing thousands of people across the province and is attracting private sector investment at a time when we need it the most. Clean energy manufacturers have established facilities and are employing Ontarians while—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

I don't know what has happened today, but I am going to ask the member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek to come to order, and this is his final warning.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: —while they contribute to Ontario's broader goal of replacing coal-fired power gener-

ation with cleaner sources of energy. Along with the direct jobs associated with these manufacturing facilities, tens of thousands of skilled trade workers are also being employed as projects are constructed across the province.

Minister, can you please update this House on the overall status of Ontario's clean energy manufacturing sector?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: The member for Oak Ridges–Markham is exactly right. She's very concerned about where the jobs of the future are coming from, and the clean energy economy in the province of Ontario is positioning us for those future jobs.

In the past couple of years alone, we've seen manufacturing facilities set up in Windsor, Tillsonburg, London, Guelph, Welland, Newmarket—it sounds like a Via Rail commercial—Burlington, Peterborough, Hawkesbury, Cambridge, Sault Ste. Marie, among others—already 20,000 jobs related to the green energy economy, just in the last couple of years.

The member is right: When we put up those facilities, you've got construction jobs all around the province, in every riding, that are benefiting from the completion of these clean energy facilities.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Thank you, Minister. I'm pleased to hear that Ontario's clean energy manufacturing sector continues to succeed and employ Ontarians.

Minister, General Electric, one of the largest companies in the world, has decided to invest in Ontario; in fact, in my riding of Oak Ridges–Markham. It is now home to the new GE Grid IQ Innovation Centre, a first in smart grid development in all of North America.

Clearly, Ontario's clean energy economy has become a beacon for companies to come and invest in our province. I know that investments in our clean energy economy have reached some \$27 billion, and this is good news for Ontario.

Minister, can you please tell this House what impact General Electric's investments will have on Ontario's clean energy economy?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: The member is right. It was just last year that the member from Oak Ridges–Markham and my colleague the Minister of Economic Development and Innovation were there with GE to open the GE Grid IQ Innovation Centre. There are hundreds of jobs. They just added 150 more jobs. There are 340-plus jobs there already. GE is making a \$150-million investment in the province of Ontario.

Where is this investment going to take us? Well, it's going to take us to be leaders in the clean tech sector. That sector is going to be a \$3-trillion market in 2020. I know my colleague the Minister of Economic Development and Innovation is travelling all over, talking about Ontario's leadership in this area.

With leaders like GE and Siemens and so many others, we're positioning Ontario for the jobs of the future in that \$3-trillion market.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Rod Jackson: My question is to the Minister of Health. Speaker, the minister's failure to give a straight answer on the scandal and corruption at Ornge is reflective of her inability to manage her portfolio. Every day, more brown envelopes are showing up in PC inboxes. She has lost control of the Ministry of Health, and is consequently unable to fulfill her duties as minister. So I ask her: Will she finally put her province before her political ambitions and resign her position?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: For just a brief moment there, I thought the member from Barrie was going to rise to talk about the hospital that's being built in his community. Unfortunately, he voted against it, and I guess we'll just have to wait for that thank you. I'm sure it's going to come, as it will come from other members with hospitals being built in their communities.

There is no question that there were serious problems at Ornge; that the leadership there was not doing their job. They forgot who it was they were working for. One of those people in leadership was none other than Kelly Mitchell. Not only did Kelly Mitchell sit on the board at Ornge; he also hired Dr. Mazza's girlfriend in 2005 at the request of Dr. Mazza.

I think the people opposite have to let the committee do their work.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: There is work to do. The most important thing we do—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I would ask all members: Please do not make me get up when I say thank you.

Supplementary question?

Mr. Rod Jackson: My question had nothing to do with Kelly Mitchell; it had everything to do with the minister's failure of leadership on the air and land ambulance files that are indicative of her inability to oversee the Ministry of Health.

Throughout the Ornge scandal, she has been perpetually uninformed and unprepared. After nearly a year of inaction on the sorry state of medical transfers in the province of Ontario, the minister has yet again failed to make any progress. The minister is barely treading water, and patient care is suffering as a result.

I ask her this: Given that, under her watch, patient safety has been compromised on a number of fronts, and she does not appear to be able to take the necessary action, will she put the safety of Ontarians before her leadership ambitions and resign today?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I understand that the members opposite are kind of uncomfortable with the links between Ornge and their caucus, but I can tell you we are taking action. There's one piece of action that I

am very determined to move through this Legislature, and that is Bill 50.

If the members opposite really care about what's going on at Ornge, they will support Bill 50. Bill 50 is what we need to do to complete the transformation at Ornge, and I expect—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I want to ask the member from Renfrew if I have already warned him or not.

Mr. John Yakabuski: No.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I haven't? Just asking.

New question.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Cindy Forster: My question is for the Minister of Health as well; she's popular today.

People in Niagara have been frustrated for many years with their health care. Countless promises by this government to improve care have instead closed our emergency rooms and hospital departments and, recently, the cancellation of an entire project in West Lincoln.

Last night, 12,000 people came out to voice their opposition to the cancellation of this project. The Niagara Health System is expected today to unveil major recommendations for changes to health care services. This time, will the government listen to the people of Niagara before making changes that affect them?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Sending in a supervisor to a hospital is the last thing a health minister wants to do, but sometimes, I have no choice but to do that, and in the Niagara Health System, that was one example where sending in a supervisor has turned out to be exactly the right thing to do. Dr. Kevin Smith, I think, has done an exceptionally fine job as supervisor. I look forward to seeing his recommendations on what more needs to be done. I can tell you that Dr. Smith has put a very high priority on listening to the members of the community, and I expect we'll see that reflected today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cindy Forster: Today an announcement by the Niagara Health System supervisor, Kevin Smith, will lay out the future of the NHS in recommendations. It's expected to be concerning news for people who have been relying on health care in their local communities. Centralizing services and making people travel farther from their homes seems to be the direction that the NHS has been going.

Can the Minister of Health assure the people of Niagara that this time local communities will be seen as an equal partner, that their voices will be listened to and that short-term, Band-Aid fixes will be avoided?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would urge the member opposite to actually wait until she's seen the report from Dr. Smith before she dismisses it. I expect that Dr. Smith will come forward with some strong recommendations. We will, of course, review them very carefully, but I do

know that Dr. Smith has travelled throughout the region and has listened to people in the community. He is a leader in our health care system. He is determined to deliver the highest-quality care that is possible. So let's look forward to see what the next steps are on the Niagara Health System.

VOLUNTEERS

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Minister, my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt is very fortunate. Our community benefits every day from the hard work of our countless volunteers. They volunteer in our schools, hospitals and community organizations. Volunteers touch our lives and make our communities a better place to live. That's why I was so proud this past March 26 to participate in the Scarborough Volunteer Service Award presentation. This year, 277 worthy recipients were honoured at our ceremony. I know many members of this House will want to attend the Volunteer Service Awards in their own community this year.

My question: Can the minister tell the House more about the Volunteer Service Award and how they can help recognize the outstanding volunteers in Ontario communities?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I thank the member for Scarborough—Agincourt for her commitment to helping others. I was pleased to join her at the VSA ceremony in Scarborough. Every year these awards celebrate the enormous impact volunteers have on our lives. Five-million-strong, volunteers are found in every corner of our great province. All of our selfless volunteers make a difference. These awards are just one way that we show our appreciation.

The annual Volunteer Service Award ceremonies are now in full swing in communities across this province. This year more than 10,000 volunteers will receive the Trillium pin for continuous service to local organizations. Congratulations to all of this year's VSA recipients and thank you all for what you do to make Ontario a better place to live.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Soo Wong: The Volunteer Service Awards are always a great event in my community. They reinvigorate the spirit of volunteerism and get people thinking about how we can recognize and thank the dedicated volunteers—volunteers like grade 12 students George Xu, Mimi Daimiao Tan, Bryan Babiarz and Celestine Oi Han Chan-Liu.

Ever since the ceremony, constituents in Scarborough—Agincourt have asked me how they can recognize volunteers who have made a difference in their lives. Minister, who is eligible to receive a VSA and how can Ontarians get involved to help recognize volunteers in our communities?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Thank you to the member for being a champion of volunteerism in her community.

Ontario volunteers can receive a VSA for unpaid continuous service to their community for up to five years or

more. Youth under the age of 24 can be recognized for two or more years of service. And organizations can nominate up to six of their volunteers—seven if one is a youth.

It's important to know that the deadline each year for submitting nominations is January 25. Even though the deadline is many months away, it's never too early to start thinking about recognizing our outstanding volunteers. Ontario has a strong and proud tradition of volunteering. I extend heartfelt thanks to those who do so much to make our communities better for everyone, every day.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: My question to the Deputy Premier. I would ask a page to deliver this material to the Deputy Premier. That is the amount of information that was ordered for one witness by a government member of the public accounts committee. Under the terms of reference of the government accounts committee, we are limited in most cases to eight minutes per caucus to question that witness.

1130

The kind of slurs that the Minister of Health and other members of this committee, of this government, are throwing at individuals without an opportunity for them to give a proper explanation for what they have done is evidence of why we need a full inquiry into the Ornge scandal.

I will ask the Deputy Premier this: Will he agree to honour the motion of the public accounts committee to adopt the terms that we have proposed to ensure that we get to the bottom of this mess?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Deputy Premier?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. John Milloy: It's hard not to comment on the honourable member's accusations here in the House, someone who has repeatedly stood up and tried to hold hearings here on the floor of the House with drive-by smears. The simple fact is that the public accounts committee has the power and authority it needs to conduct the hearings. They are doing an excellent job.

I point out to the members opposite that yesterday, I believe, the committee felt there was one particular individual they wanted to hear longer from, so they adjusted the timing. The committee has the authority and has the controls that it needs.

As I say, Mr. Speaker, if the member wants to do this kind of kangaroo court here in the House, I will raise the issues—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, I know the government House leader would have a hard time holding that material that I passed across. I'd like him to try to lift it,

at least. Eight minutes, in most cases, is what we have to question a witness. The motion that was put forward, that we're asking the government House leader to bring to this Legislature to approve, simply provides the Chair to call hearings at his will, subject to the subcommittee. It allows us to broaden the scope of those hearings so that we can get to the bottom of this.

I want to know this from the government House leader: What is he hiding? Who does he want to protect? If he wants to get to the bottom of it, as we do, he'll bring that motion forward and allow this House to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Government House leader.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound will withdraw.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, you won't. You'll stand and withdraw.

Mr. Bill Walker: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, what's kind of interesting—and I think all members will find it interesting—is, it's my understanding that most of the documentation that was sent across has to do with the PC lobbyist Kelly Mitchell, linking him to the Ornge situation. I think we all know who Kelly Mitchell is. He's a very prominent Conservative with very, very close ties to the PC Party and the Leader of the Opposition. He was paid almost \$400,000 to lobby and schmooze Progressive Conservative MPPs. He is a huge donor and fundraiser for the PC Party. He was involved in the hiring of Kelly Long.

Perhaps the PC Party wants to provide a little bit more—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

TOURISM

Ms. Sarah Campbell: My question is to the Minister of Tourism. This government cited declining numbers as the reason for closing the tourist information centres in Kenora, Fort Frances and Rainy River, but the government's own numbers show that the traffic at Pigeon River is lower, yet it remains open. Minister, can you please explain how these decisions were made?

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to thank the member for asking the question. Tourism in Ontario is an economic driver, and we are committed to promoting tourism across Ontario, including northwestern Ontario.

Speaker, allow me to give you some numbers—that over the years that we have been promoting tourism in northwestern Ontario. Since 2003, we have invested or committed over \$68 million to support tourism initiatives in the north, including in Kenora, Rainy River and Fort Frances.

Northern Ontario offers visitors beautiful natural landscapes and a variety of vibrant festivals and events. Since 2010, we have also provided approximately \$5 million annually to the new northern regional tourism—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I didn't hear an answer, so I'm going to ask the same question again. This government cited declining numbers as the reason for closing tourist information centres in Kenora, Fort Frances and Rainy River, but the government's own numbers show that traffic at Pigeon River is lower, and yet it remains open.

So I am wondering if the minister can please explain to me, the people of this House, the people of Thunder Bay and the people of Kenora–Rainy River why and how these decisions were made.

Hon. Michael Chan: As part of our plan, we will realign our tourism marketing services by focusing on online travel marketing activities. This will allow us to meet consumers' travel research preferences through major redevelopment of Ontario's tourism information website, call centre and brochure distribution service.

Travellers are turning increasingly to the Internet to organize their trips. In 2010, over four times more travellers used the Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership Corp.'s website to make travel plans than those who visited a travel information centre.

USE OF QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Oshawa on a point of order.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Mr. Speaker, this is at least the third time that I have risen in this Legislature on this very issue. The Speaker in the past has ruled regarding this practice, and I will quote a couple of those.

December 13, 2007: "I would therefore remind the House that as much as possible, ministers should refrain from using question period to make statements that might more appropriately be made during a ministerial statement, particularly in response to questions asked by the members sitting on government benches."

Although some members may think this is not a serious matter, it is a breach of the protocols of this Legislature, and I will continue to bring these forward.

Then, on November 2, 2009, he specifically stated—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. This is a serious point of order. I need to hear it.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Speaker Peters stated, "I can say that regarding last Wednesday's question period, the matter is a little more definite. In replying both to the main question and the supplementary, the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities quite specifically used the opportunities to make announcements regarding his ministry's response to certain problems with a private career college."

"The member for Oshawa has a valid point of order and was correct that this is an improper use of question period."

Mr. Speaker, I would go on that, today, during question period, the member from Mississauga–Streetsville very specifically asked the Minister of Government Services a very important question, and the minister responded, “I am very pleased to announce...”, and then he goes on to explain the announcement.

The Speakers’ rulings in the past have been very much against all parties regarding this aspect and very much against parliamentary protocols. As such, announcements are better served during ministerial statements. I would ask the Speaker to now take appropriate action.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On the same point of order, the member from Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, I don’t want to belabour the point, but I think the member raises an important point, and I’m just going to make this, to add to it.

It’s pretty clear that the way that our standing orders are written, there’s a time for ministers to be able to make the statements, and that’s properly done under standing order 35, where it says a minister of the crown may make a statement.

I think the member made the points that I don’t need to repeat. I would just urge the government, especially in the ability to make this House work a little bit better, to respect the rules as written, and the idea is to have ministerial statements so ministers can make those types of statements, and it allows the opposition to respond. Doing it in this way, I think, is not helpful.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On the same point of order, the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I’ll declare it the same point of order. I think you will agree, probably, because it talks about the contents of questions directed in the House.

Mr. Speaker, if you listened carefully to the innuendo and inflammatory language used by the opposition, accusatory questions that are directed to members of the government, then I think that we have to recognize that people who live in glass houses shouldn’t be throwing—

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Could we strike that testimony from the record?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I might remember. That is not germane to this point of order.

I’m prepared to rule on this point of order. Not only does the member have a point of order; he is correct.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. Be seated. Be seated.

Question period is not to be used by the government as a forum in which to announce a new policy. I would ask that that be adhered to in this House at all times.

Another point of order: the member from Mississauga–Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, I rise on a point of order pursuant to standing orders 23(h), 23(i), 23(k) and standing order 37(d).

In his question to the Deputy Premier, the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke made repeated remarks that imputed motives and used insulting language, par-

ticularly in reference to the member from Kitchener Centre.

I would ask, Speaker, whether or not, upon reflection, the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke would wish to withdraw the offending remarks, and I would ask the Speaker to consider the transcript in relation to standing orders 23(h), 23(i), 23(k) and standing order—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): To allow somebody to hear this, it is a point of order until I decide it’s not a point of order.

Number two: The member does know that I’ve made reference to this once before, and that is, I will not be reviewing Hansard, as I need to hear it as the day is presented for itself. Any member has the opportunity to withdraw or correct their own record. If I did not hear it and yet there was an opportunity for the member to withdraw, he or she will do so.

DEFERRED VOTES

ACCEPTING SCHOOLS ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 POUR DES ÉCOLES TOLÉRANTES

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 13, An Act to amend the Education Act with respect to bullying and other matters / Projet de loi 13, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l’éducation en ce qui a trait à l’intimidation et à d’autres questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We now have a deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 13. Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1142 to 1147.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On December 7, 2011, Ms. Broten moved second reading of Bill 13.

All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura
Armstrong, Teresa J.
Balkissoon, Bas
Bartolucci, Rick
Bentley, Christopher
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Best, Margaret
Bisson, Gilles
Bradley, James J.
Broten, Laurel C.
Campbell, Sarah
Chan, Michael
Chiarelli, Bob
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Craitor, Kim
Damerla, Dipika
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
DiNovo, Cheri

Duguid, Brad
Duncan, Dwight
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Forster, Cindy
Gerretsen, John
Gélinas, France
Gravelle, Michael
Horwath, Andrea
Hoskins, Eric
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Kwinter, Monte
Leal, Jeff
MacCharles, Tracy
Mangat, Amrit
Mantha, Michael
Marchese, Rosario
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McGuinty, Dalton
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil

Meilleur, Madeleine
Miller, Paul
Milloy, John
Mondi, Reza
Murray, Glen R.
Natyshak, Taras
Oraziotti, David
Piruzza, Teresa
Prue, Michael
Qaadri, Shafiq
Sandals, Liz
Schein, Jonah
Singh, Jagmeet
Sorbara, Greg
Sousa, Charles
Tabuns, Peter
Takhar, Harinder S.
Taylor, Monique
Vanthof, John
Wong, Soo
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Steve
Dunlop, Garfield
Elliott, Christine
Fedeli, Victor
Hardeman, Ernie
Hillier, Randy
Hudak, Tim

Jackson, Rod
Jones, Sylvia
Klees, Frank
MacLaren, Jack
MacLeod, Lisa
McDonell, Jim
McKenna, Jane
McNaughton, Monte
Miller, Norm
Milligan, Rob E.
Nicholls, Rick

O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Pettapiece, Randy
Scott, Laurie
Shurman, Peter
Smith, Todd
Thompson, Lisa M.
Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim
Yakubski, John
Yurek, Jeff

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 66; the nays are 33.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. I find this interesting. I'm in the middle of a vote.

I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to the order of the House earlier today, the bill is referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order for the Minister of Government Services.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Mr. Speaker, when I was answering the question from the member for Mississauga–Streetsville, I did use the words "I am pleased to announce," but what I really wanted to say was, "I am pleased to inform the House." So I wanted to correct my record.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That is a point of order. The member can correct his record. I thank the member for that point.

There is no further vote. This House stands adjourned until this afternoon at 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1152 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I would like to introduce a group of people here from Community Living Tillsonburg. I believe they've been here almost every year since I've been here. We want to welcome them back to Queen's Park.

I don't believe they're in the gallery just yet, because I had lunch with them in the dining room here at the building and they ate slower than I did.

Mr. Michael Coteau: In about 10 minutes, we'll be joined by a class from Victoria Park Collegiate. I'd like to welcome them to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. It's my former school and I look forward to them being here.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Huron–Bruce.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Yes, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And speaking of Bruce, I'm very privileged to welcome some great people here from Walkerton Community Living: Linda Batte, Harv Potts, Crystal Wales, Heather Munro, Craig Harrison, Doris Weber, Nicole Kreager, Crystal Kreager and Carol Patterson. They're in your Speaker's gallery and directly across. Welcome, you guys.

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'd like to welcome Rick Ciccarelli and members of the Clean Train Coalition to the House today. Thanks for coming.

Hon. Margaret R. Best: I would like to acknowledge from the Consumers Council of Canada, who are with us in the gallery today, Mr. Don Mercer, president, and executive director Ken Whitehurst.

I would also like to acknowledge Paul Lee-Chin, my sister, Clara, and some of my staff who are here from the Ministry of Consumer Services.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm very pleased to have a number of guests from north Durham Community Living. I welcome you to Queen's Park. They are: Colleen Arbuckle, Felishia Charles, Alysha Graham, Erik Giffin, Niko Pupella, Blair Graham, Bing Pangilion, Cathy Parker, as well as Garry Cooke and Lori Cooke. I'm expecting that Janet Hutchuk, Christopher Grondines and Dwayne Pemberton should be here as well this afternoon.

Welcome to Queen's Park. Enjoy the day.

Mr. John Yakubski: I'm pleased to welcome here at Queen's Park today members of the Canadian-Polish Foundation who are here to celebrate the 221st anniversary of the proclamation of the Polish Constitution. We have with us its founder and chairman, Marek Goldyn, Bogdan Labecki, Elizabeth Hamulka, Stan Saalborn and Alicja Czech. Welcome to Queen's Park.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ELAINE STANDEAVEN

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Agriculture is a vital part of our economy and our lives. It's true across Ontario and especially in Perth–Wellington.

The agri-food industry contributes more than \$33 billion to the Ontario economy and employs nearly 700,000 people. In Perth county, 20% of all jobs are tied to agriculture, and it's a similar story in Wellington.

However, such impressive numbers don't just happen. They are due to the skill and dedication of Ontario's farm families.

Today, I want to pay tribute to one of my constituents, Elaine Standeven of St. Marys, who is making a difference. That is why the Ontario Holstein association gave her the Outstanding Dairy Woman Service Award. This award recognizes the accomplishments of Ontario women devoted to serving, promoting and enhancing the dairy industry.

Elaine's contributions are indeed impressive. To name just a few, she has served as director and president of the

Stratford agricultural society and as executive director on the National Holstein Convention committee for Perth county. She has also been a dairy educator, informing our students about the dairy industry.

I congratulate Elaine on her leadership and thank all farmers in Perth–Wellington and across Ontario for their work each and every day.

ELLIOT LAKE SENIORS ROUNDTABLE

Mr. Michael Mantha: There are many incredible and active seniors' groups in my riding, and over the course of my privileged time here in this Legislature, I hope to share many of them and recognize their efforts. These groups are always eager to meet with me and discuss how we can make communities more friendly for seniors.

Today I want to highlight a group in my riding who have been doing outstanding work. The Elliot Lake Seniors Roundtable is a group who have discussions, conduct research, do advocacy work and have become a positive force in the community, working with the municipality and other partners to improve the quality of life for seniors through the development of age-friendly policies.

Recently, the Elliot Lake Seniors Roundtable has been contacted by researchers from the Centre for Rural and Northern Health Research at Laurentian University. They are in the final stages of completing a report for Human Resources and Skills Development Canada entitled Social Inclusion of Seniors and Informal Caregivers in Elliot Lake: A Scoping Study.

After viewing their website, this group from Laurentian University became very interested in the work that the Elliot Lake Seniors Roundtable is doing, because it merges with the analysis they have completed based on the same parameters they are exploring from Age-Friendly Rural and Remote Communities: A Guide.

Seniors in our province experience unique challenges, and even more so in northern and remote communities. I look forward to working with all groups and making Algoma–Manitoulin the most seniors-friendly riding in the province.

ANNIVERSARY OF POLISH CONSTITUTION

Ms. Helena Jacek: I am delighted to rise today to commemorate the proclamation of the Polish Constitution on May 3, 1791. Being of Polish descent myself, I'm proud that Poland's Constitution is recognized as the first in Europe, and second to the United States worldwide.

Situated in Central Europe, Poland, with its bountiful natural resources, has been the target of invading armies for centuries. Celebrations of Polish Constitution Day were banned during years of foreign occupation and partition by neighbouring states. But the memory of the Constitution and its ideals were passed down from generation to generation and help keep alive the dreams and hopes for an independent and just society.

In 1918, Poland regained its independence and May 3 was again declared an official holiday, only to be banned again by Nazi and Soviet occupiers. May 3 was restored as an official holiday in April 1990, after the fall of Communism.

I've had the good fortune to be in Poland during this important day, to witness the display of ethnic pride, from costume dances to marching bands, and of course, to sample the perogy, the kielbasa and all the glorious Polish cuisine.

To Poles and their descendants, May 3 symbolizes the fierce Polish spirit of independence, and its priceless heritage of humanitarianism, tolerance and democracy.

Remarks in Polish.

Long live an independent Poland.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Ontario's economy has suffered under the misguided policies of this government. Their next victims are those people directly and indirectly affected by this government's decision to cancel the slots-at-racetracks program. Their other victims are the 2,000-plus horses that will be slaughtered as a result of this decision.

As a result of a contractual agreement going back to 1997 with municipalities and racetracks, the province agreed to share the revenues generated at slot machines at racetracks across Ontario. The province receives billions of dollars in economic stimulus, which is invested in hospitals, the volunteer sector and municipal projects, without the need to use tax dollars.

The province also secures over 60,000 jobs. This amounts to \$1.5 billion in wages and salaries being sustained annually. This economic activity helps create thriving communities. As the Destination Campbellville Community Association has said, within this community at Mohawk Racetrack and Woodbine Entertainment, there are hundreds of people: grooms, trainers, jockeys, veterinarians, farriers, feed dealers, hay and straw suppliers and many other workers.

The horse racing industry is an economic driver in Ontario. The horse racing industry creates and sustains jobs in Ontario. The horse racing industry helps rural communities to thrive. As this government stalls and fails to give the industry information about the transitional funding, they are threatening the lives of the newly born foals.

Despite the promise of transitional funding, this government still plans to cancel the slots-at-racetracks program, another misguided economic policy that will further hinder the economic prosperity of Ontario and its residents.

CONDOMINIUM LEGISLATION

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It has been 14 years since Ontario's Condominium Act was last updated. Since that time, we have witnessed an explosion in the number of condos being built.

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Today, there are 525,000 condominium units in this province and over one million condo dwellers, yet the legislation that governs their homes, that dictates how their buildings' reserve funds are spent, that determines who sits on their condo board of directors, remains unchanged. Surely we can recognize that this legislation does not work for Ontarians.

Under our current law, disputes are settled in courts at great cost to all parties. Under our current law, new condo owners are subject to unclear sales contracts and unlicensed property managers. Under our current law, condo owners discover inadequate building standards and units that may not be covered by warranty.

It's time to face reality. Over the past four years, members from all parties, including some of my Liberal backbenchers, have publicly supported the various changes I have proposed.

On May 10, we will be debating Bill 72. I encourage all members to support it and demonstrate that Queen's Park understands the concerns of these one million Ontarians.

YOUNG SINGERS

Mr. Joe Dickson: I'm delighted to rise today to commend the Young Singers of Ajax on 20 years of success. This year, 2012, the Young Singers celebrate their 20th anniversary of empowering and educating our youth through the power of music.

Founded in 1992 by artistic director Anna Lynn Murphy—and originally in co-operation with the town of Ajax—children from the age of six and up are provided with opportunities to combine the discipline of learning with the joy of singing and the art of performing.

Since 2002, the Young Singers have recorded three full-length albums and have travelled to Nova Scotia; British Columbia; Nashville, Tennessee; and prior to that, they had a successful 10-day performance tour of the United Kingdom.

The Young Singers have also given their youth participants the opportunity to work and perform alongside notable celebrities such as Donny Osmond and Chantel Lauren.

I'm proud of this hometown group that was born in my riding of Ajax-Pickering.

In closing, you won't want to miss the Young Singers' 20th anniversary concert on May 26 at the Trinity Pentecostal Church in Oshawa. I urge you to visit www.youngsingers.ca for more information.

DAWN PAXTON

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I am happy today to recognize Dawn Paxton on her retirement. Jennifer Adams, the director of education at the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board, called Dawn a "teacher of teachers."

She's many things. She's a wife of more than 35 years, a working mum to three kids who are now grown.

She has been a friend to many. As I just mentioned, she was a great teacher, and not only that, she is an internationally recognized educator in the area of special needs.

She has helped educate this province's children in Ottawa, Kitchener, Waterloo, London, as well as in Winnipeg—I'm sure my colleague from Toronto Centre would agree.

After six years as superintendent of learning support services with the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board, Dawn is going into her well-deserved retirement to spend more time with her husband and her family.

As the superintendent of learning support services, Dawn introduced many programs and developed a large variety of community partnerships. She has "significantly improved access to special education funding," something I think all in this chamber appreciate her doing.

She has continually strived, as superintendent, to improve teaching and learning for children with special needs in Ottawa and has been a champion for these children and their families.

She's a well-respected educator who has worked in kindergarten classrooms, high school labs and lectured at universities to new generations of teachers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Speaker, to Dawn, her husband, Joe, her son, Jay, and daughters Taylor and Whitney—I know they're going to enjoy this retirement.

Speaker, thank you for your indulgence for letting me go over my time.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I have indulged. Members' statements.

PETERBOROUGH FISHING FESTIVAL

Mr. Jeff Leal: I rise today to offer my personal congratulations and thanks to Councillor Dan McWilliams and Mr. Bill Mortlock and their team of Ducks Unlimited volunteers and local residents for their commitment to the Peterborough Greenwing Fishing Festival. This is the 25th anniversary of this great event. This year, 5,000 trout were released in the Trent-Severn Waterway just south of the lift lock in Peterborough.

There's always a great deal of excitement when Walter is released each year. Walter is the ultimate catch, sometimes weighing close to the weight of the child who hooks him. Saturday is kids' day, and only children under the age of 15 are allowed to fish. Sunday is open to the young and the young at heart.

This is one of the most popular events in Peterborough. Participants start lining the shores, many times before 7 a.m. Many attendees first come as children but now attend as a parent; residents who took their children are now taking their grandchildren. Through Ducks Unlimited, the children learn about fishing, conservation and the importance of respecting nature.

Mr. Speaker, this is a fantastic community event that brings thousands together for a weekend in April on the shores of the Trent-Severn Waterway. I know I have

stood with my own children in snow, sleet and rain and wind and sunshine as they tried to catch Walter.

Without the dedication of Dan McWilliams and Bill Mortlock and their devoted team of volunteers, including Ducks Unlimited, this great event would not happen. Congratulations to everyone involved.

ANNIVERSARY OF POLISH CONSTITUTION

Mr. John Yakabuski: It gives me great pleasure to rise today on the occasion of the annual commemoration of Poland's May 3, 1791, Constitution, which was the first in Europe and the second in the world.

To Poles and their descendants, May 3 is a national holiday, for it bestows upon them a priceless heritage of humanitarianism, tolerance and freedom, conceived at a time when most of Europe lived under the existence of unconditional power and tyranny. The tyranny deemed the Polish Constitution too dangerous, and Poland lost its independence, its territories annexed by Austria, Russia and Prussia. In terms of a national life, Poland lost the entire 19th century, being reborn again in 1918.

In the mid-1800s, the ancestors of my father, Paul, immigrated to Canada from the Kashubian region of Poland. In 1963, he became the first person of Polish descent to be elected to this Legislature.

My riding is home to Wilno, Canada's first Polish settlement, where each year the Wilno Heritage Society gathers to celebrate our Kashub Polish heritage on the first Saturday in May. I look forward to joining them this weekend to celebrate friendship, fellowship and freedom from Communist rule, as well as the recognition of the tremendous impact the Polish Kashub culture has had and the contribution it has made to our community, Ontario and Canada.

This will be a day of celebration for Polish people everywhere, as they mark the 221st anniversary of their constitution. We join them in that celebration.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 2, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement a healthy homes renovation tax credit / *Projet de loi 2, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts en vue de mettre en oeuvre le crédit d'impôt pour l'aménagement du logement axé sur le bien-être.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Therefore ordered for third reading.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Kenora–Rainy River has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport, concerning Ontario tourist information centres. This matter will be debated Tuesday, May 8, at 6 p.m.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

WIRELESS SERVICES AGREEMENTS ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LES CONVENTIONS DE SERVICES SANS FIL

Ms. Best moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 82, An Act to strengthen consumer protection with respect to consumer agreements relating to wireless services accessed from a cellular phone, smart phone or any other similar mobile device / *Projet de loi 82, Loi visant à mieux protéger les consommateurs en ce qui concerne les conventions de consommation portant sur les services sans fil accessibles au moyen d'un téléphone cellulaire, d'un téléphone intelligent ou de tout autre appareil mobile semblable.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: I will make my statement during ministerial statements.

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METROLINX AMENDMENT ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR METROLINX

Mr. Schein moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 83, An Act to amend the Metrolinx Act, 2006 / *Projet de loi 83, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur Metrolinx.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Jonah Schein: The bill amends the Metrolinx Act, 2006, to require Metrolinx to ensure that any passenger railway system established between downtown Toronto and Toronto Pearson International Airport is not powered by diesel fuel. It has huge support from folks in my community, huge support from Toronto city council,

from the medical community and from political leaders across Toronto. There are huge costs if we don't do this: huge financial costs and huge health costs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Introduction of bills?

I will take this opportunity to remind all members that when we do introduce a bill, it is the tradition of the place to read from the explanatory notes, just as an example.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Hon. Margaret R. Best: It is my pleasure to introduce the Wireless Services Agreements Act, 2012, a bill that, if passed, would better protect Ontario consumers who enter into wireless and cellphone services agreements in Ontario.

I would first begin by thanking my colleague who sits here next to me, Mr. David Oraziatti, MPP for Sault Ste. Marie—thank you, David—for his earlier introductions of Bill 133 and Bill 5.

Our government is taking strong action to protect Ontario's consumers and to stop cell shock. This bill, which would apply to agreements for wireless services that are accessed from cellphones, smart phones and similar mobile devices, will, if passed, protect and empower consumers while strengthening confidence in the marketplace.

The bill we are introducing today, if passed, will further protect consumers by allowing consumers to cancel agreements at any time without high cancellation fees; requiring that service providers use clear and comprehensive language and fully disclose all the terms of their agreements so that consumers understand what they are agreeing to; ensuring all-inclusive price advertising—if companies advertise prices, they must include all costs; and giving consumers the right to recover three times the amount of a refund that is owed to them under the proposed new law, if passed, if the consumer has to sue to recover the amount owed to them. As long as a device is under warranty, a provider could not charge for services that cannot be used while the device is in for repairs. And finally, the bill, if passed, would require companies to have a system in place to remind customers that they are close to exceeding their maximum service limits and may incur additional charges.

This bill, if passed, would help stop cell shock, help to strengthen confidence in the marketplace, and help Ontario families and individuals make smart and informed choices about how they spend their hard-earned dollars.

We are taking care to see that this bill, if passed, is broadly consistent with policies being undertaken in other provinces, easing the burden of compliance on service providers. If the bill is passed, there will be a six-month implementation period to give wireless service providers time to comply with these rules.

The Wireless Services Agreements Act, 2012, if passed, would build on our government's commitment to consumer protection, providing more disclosure, fairness and confidence in the marketplace. Giving consumers back their rights is a priority of the government of Ontario and the Ministry of Consumer Services, and we continue to build on the foundation we have laid in protecting Ontario's consumers.

In closing, I again thank Mr. David Oraziatti for his leadership in this regard, and I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

COMMUNITY LIVING DAY

Hon. John Milloy: I rise in the House today to recognize Community Living Day here at Queen's Park.

It's been many years since the first families came together to promote a community living approach to support people with a developmental disability. These parents wanted a better life for their sons and daughters. They rejected the accepted practice of institutionalizing people with a developmental disability. They envisioned a future for their children that allowed them to be contributing members in the life of their communities, so they set out to campaign for community services and supports that allowed their children to live where they belong, in loving families and actively involved in their communities.

The Community Living movement began as community-based, grassroots advocacy by families who simply wanted their children to attend local schools. In fact, it was the beginning of dramatic changes in how we support people with developmental disabilities in Ontario. That has resulted in a complete culture change. Today, people with a developmental disability are being included in all aspects of community life.

These pioneers spoke on behalf of their children and, as a government, we listened. We created the hugely successful Passport program. Through a \$45-million investment in Passport, 3,800 adults with a developmental disability have had more options to stay connected to their communities after leaving school. We closed the three remaining institutions and brought the residents back into our communities. We passed modern legislation that reflects these changes, and we created the community networks of specialized care for people with high needs. That is just the beginning of the changes we envision.

We are in the midst of transforming our entire developmental services system. We are creating a system that's more responsive and accountable, more transparent and sustainable, a system that is focused on the independence and resiliency of individuals.

To the families, friends and community partners who are with us here today, let me just say that you are doing great work. As we continue with transformation, we need you to be thinking about the years and decades ahead of us. We need you to continue to come to the table ready to work hand in hand with us as we continue on this path of transformation. The people you help, as well as the entire developmental services sector, have progressed because

of your original vision. Thanks to you, our communities are more inclusive and welcoming than they ever were for people of all abilities. You have helped to transform lives and inspired thousands of people to live up to their fullest potential. That, to me, is community living at its best. Thank you for the important work you do every day for Ontarians who have developmental disabilities. We've come so far together, and I'm confident that we will continue to move forward together.

Mr. Speaker. I invite all honourable members to join me in welcoming Community Living Ontario to Queen's Park. To our guests, I hope you have an informative and productive day.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We thank our guests for being here.

SOUTH ASIAN HERITAGE MONTH

Hon. Charles Sousa: I invite honourable members in this House to join in celebrating South Asian Heritage Month. This annual observance in the month of May was proclaimed by the House in 2001.

1330

It was on May 5, 1838, that the first immigrants from the Indian subcontinent arrived in the Americas. This date, South Asian Arrival Day, is viewed as a watershed moment by the South Asian community. It marks the passage to a new world and the start of a new era. These first arrivals settled in the Caribbean. More than a century later, they made a second migration to Canada and Ontario. They joined immigrants who moved to Canada from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Uganda, Kenya and many other places.

Our South Asian community is extremely diverse in their religion, language, tradition and culture. Over the years, South Asians have had a profound impact on all aspects of Ontario life, from business and government to science and the arts. I think of outstanding South Asian Canadians like acclaimed filmmaker Deepa Mehta; Amit Chakma, president of the University of Western Ontario; award-winning film producer Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy; world-famous wrestler Tiger Jeet Singh; and Rahul Singh, who has led disaster-relief missions around the world.

May is a month to celebrate the remarkable contributions that South Asian Canadians have made and continue to make in our communities. It's a month for all of us to share in the richness of South Asian culture through celebrations and festivities around the province. And it is a month to rejoice in the tremendous strength we gain as a society from our unparalleled diversity.

Mr. Speaker, thank you to all those who contribute to our great city, our great country and our great province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Responses?

COMMUNITY LIVING DAY

Mr. John O'Toole: I, along with Tim Hudak and the members of our caucus, am pleased to stand today and to

welcome the members of Community Living, their families and friends. Welcome to Queen's Park. I can only say that earlier today in my remarks I did introduce members from Community Living Clarington as well as north Durham. I thank them and their families. Those are people I see in our community, integrated fully into the community.

What they said to me today is that the real goal of Community Living is for all people to live within our communities in dignity. I think we all share that element of including people in our communities every single day. What they're really asking for is more support, in a time when it's appropriate to be here. But I think we're listening to them today to say, "I hope the Premier and his cabinet make sure these people have the skills and the tools to live in our community."

SOUTH ASIAN HERITAGE MONTH

Mrs. Christine Elliott: On behalf of the Ontario PC caucus, it's an honour to recognize South Asian Heritage Month. Initiated by Ontario's Progressive Conservative government in 2001, South Asian Heritage Month is a time to commemorate the significant contributions this community has made to our province.

Today, Ontario is home to over 800,000 individuals of South Asian descent. Settling in towns across this province, this community strengthens our proud legacy of multiculturalism. Guided by a belief in hard work and entrepreneurship, the South Asian community embodies values all Ontarians cherish. Their story of industry and perseverance is one all Ontarians should honour.

On behalf of the Ontario PC caucus and all Ontarians, I wish the South Asian community all the best as they celebrate their proud history.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Todd Smith: A response to the bill that was put forward by the Minister of Consumer Services, Margaret Best, on behalf of David Oraziotti.

Our critic for consumer services, Jim McDonell, was just presented with the legislation about an hour ago, but we have had some information come out about the proposed government bill, what it does contain and what its aims are. They talk about cell shock. They talk about strengthening contracts for consumers and allowing consumers to cancel services without paying large cancellation fees, which are all good things that we would support here as well.

But we are a little bit concerned about the timing of this legislation coming out of the provincial Legislature when we know full well that the Canadian Wireless Telecommunications Association, the CWTA, led by Bernard Lord, is working with the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, the CRTC. Its members are working with the federal government right now to bring in national regulations that would cover a lot of these areas of concern and bring in one

piece of legislation that would cover all 10 provinces, and the territories as well.

So we're a little bit concerned about the fact that what's going to happen as a result of this legislation coming forward is that it's going to create a patchwork of different regulations. As you know and anybody out there knows, when you add more regulations, what you end up doing is adding more red tape, which ends up costing consumers; it ends up costing users and customers in the end. So I believe we have to move very carefully to ensure that, if we are bringing in new regulation, it does match up with other provinces so we don't end up with more red tape.

Again, we do question the timing of this, because the government knows full well that the federal government is working towards bringing in legislation right now on Parliament Hill that would cover off all of these areas of concern.

We look forward to working with the government and ensuring that we can streamline the regulation so that we're not duplicating services, so that we're not making it more onerous on the companies that are out there and then, in the end, costing consumers more than what they're paying now, which is totally the opposite of what this bill is intending to do.

SOUTH ASIAN HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: On behalf of the NDP Party and my leader, Andrea Horwath, I take great pride in rising today to celebrate South Asian Heritage Month.

This month is a time to celebrate the diversity of South Asia, which includes people from various and diverse backgrounds—Punjabis, Gujaratis, Tamils; those speaking various languages—Urdu, Hindi, Malayali, Bengali; from various regions across the world—from the Caribbean Islands and from Africa; and from diverse religions, including Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, Jain, Buddhist, Zoroastrian, Christian and Jewish communities.

We celebrate that diversity, we celebrate their contribution and we are honoured to rise today. But we also remember that we must reinforce the principals of diversity and inclusion, and work towards creating a more equitable society.

In addition, I'd also rise today in solidarity with the Canadian Society for Yad Vashem, who honour Holocaust survivors. It's very crucial that we honour them in terms of recognizing harms done in the past to prevent them in the future.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I'd also like to respond to the Minister of Consumer Services with respect to wireless contract fairness. This bill is clearly a step forward, clearly a step in favour of consumers to right some of the issues and the confusion that arise under cellphone contracts, particularly given the complex language and some of the hidden cancellation fees. So it's a step in the right direction.

But I'd also like to raise the concern that in Canada, we are paying some of the highest cellphone rates in the world. These cellphone rates are the highest in terms of voice plans. We rank the highest amongst 10 countries, including Denmark, Finland, Hong Kong, India, Japan, South Korea, Sweden and Taiwan. We are the highest in terms of voice plans and the highest in terms of text plans, above Denmark, Finland, Hong Kong, India, Japan and South Korea, again. We are also paying the highest in the world with respect to data plans.

While this is certainly a step in the right direction, and I commend the minister for taking this initiative, there is certainly a long way to go. We have serious issues in the cellphone industry where we are paying exorbitant fees. Consumers are hard hit, and we need to take steps to ensure that consumers are being treated fairly and that legislation protects their interests.

COMMUNITY LIVING DAY

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's an absolute privilege to rise on behalf of Community Living Ontario and to welcome them here to the Legislature on behalf of the New Democratic Party and our leader, Andrea Horwath. It's incredible work they do across our province.

In response to the Minister of Community and Social Services, I just have a few things to say, and it's really their asks. What they would like to see this government do is to address the 20,000 individuals who are languishing right now—to use their term, “languishing”—on wait-lists. To use their words, they would like to see a long-term strategy that would address the dire poverty of those who live with disabilities. This is what they've asked for, this is what they would like to see, and it's a critical one.

They would also like the government, before they do anything, to wait for the social service review that is now ongoing and whose results will be coming in June, and that will have a great deal to say about the situation of those who are under the umbrella of Community Living Ontario.

Those are direct asks. We also add our voice to theirs and we say, “Please respond to them. Give them some answers. Give them a plan. Give them a reason to hope.”

1340

I, myself, in my own riding, have brought individuals down here. One particular family came down, not once, not twice, but three times asking for Passport funding because they couldn't get it and they desperately needed it. It was not the current Minister of Community and Social Services; it was another one at that time. It took three visits before they even had a call from anybody in the ministry to address their issues, and finally, they got Passport funding. It shouldn't take that. It should not take that to get a response from across the aisle.

We're asking for a response. We cannot possibly, any of us, bring down every family on that wait-list. We speak, really, with Community Living for all of the 20,000 and those who are coming: Please, a plan. Please

wait for the review. Please address the dire poverty and the problems that this community faces. Please do it now.

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for York Centre on a point of order.

Mr. Monte Kwinter: Mr. Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent that up to five minutes be allotted to each party to speak in memory of Yom ha-Shoah.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House? Agreed? Agreed.

The member for York Centre.

Mr. Monte Kwinter: Mr. Speaker, in a ceremony at Queen's Park earlier today we recognized and honoured 19 Holocaust survivors whose stories of anguish, suffering and survival of both body and spirit are a testimony to the human life we live. Those Holocaust survivors, who are in the House today, came to Ontario, rebuilt their lives, and were honoured for their wonderful contribution as citizens of Ontario. Those honoured are: Amek Adler, Andrew Adler, Livia Eva Adler, Claire Baum, George Berman, George Fox, Lea Hochman, Chava Kwinta, George Lysy, Judy Lysy, Sara Marmurek, Felix Opatowski, Morris Rosenberg, Miriam Schlanger, Gerta Solan, Gena Tenenbaum, Joe Tenenbaum, Emma Weisz and Erich Weisz.

Today, we recognize Yom ha-Shoah V'Hagvurah, Holocaust Memorial Day, a day designated for Holocaust remembrance in communities around the world. This is the 19th year the Ontario Legislature has observed Holocaust Memorial Day, and I'm proud to say that Ontario was the first jurisdiction in the world, outside of the state of Israel, to officially recognize it.

As we mourn the death of the six million victims, we also celebrate the life of those who survived.

I have visited Yad Vashem, the Holocaust memorial and museum in Jerusalem, several times. Two years ago, Premier Dalton McGuinty, Minister Eric Hoskins, MPP Mike Colle, MPP David Zimmer and I were at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem and laid a wreath, on behalf of all Ontarians, in the Hall of Remembrance. The memorial is dedicated to preserving the memory and story of each of the six million people who died in the Holocaust.

As a Jew, these memories strike the heart and the soul. Every Jew is touched by the Holocaust. We lost loved ones, family members or friends. All members in the community lost someone.

The Holocaust echoes through generations. The loss is extraordinary. At Yad Vashem, that loss is made real. It is concrete. You can touch it. In the Valley of the Communities, you stand before wall after wall, carved out of the solid rock, listing the names of more than 5,000 communities that lived, breathed, had life, in which men and women loved, married, raised children, worked, laughed and worshipped. Today, in most cases, nothing remains of these Jewish communities except for their names forever frozen in the bedrock of Yad Vashem. It was there that I found the name of the city where my

father was born, Czystochowa, and the city where my mother was born, Sosnowiec.

The Holocaust reaches out of the past and touches the shoulder of every Jew. The central theme of Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day, 2012, is "My Brother's Keeper."

Holocaust Memorial Day commemorates all who died in the Holocaust, not just Jews. We also remember those whom the Nazis targeted for their race, their religion, their politics, their disabilities or their sexual orientation.

I want to take a moment to share my visit to Babi Yar, which means "Grandmothers Park." This is a ravine outside of Kiev, in north-central Ukraine. In 1989, as Minister of Industry, Trade and Technology, I led the first-ever trade mission of 100 Canadian-born Ukrainian businessmen to Kiev. At that time, it was still a part of the Soviet Union. I was greeted at the airport by the Prime Minister, and during the drive to our hotel, he asked if I had time to visit Babi Yar. He obviously knew that I was Jewish. I had heard of Babi Yar for years, but really didn't know exactly what it was. I can tell you, I soon found out.

In September 1941, the Nazi occupiers informed the Jewish community that they'd been asked by the International Red Cross to transport the entire Jewish community to a safer location, away from the battle front. Some non-Jewish citizens, hearing of the plan, joined the group, hoping for the same kind of safe haven. On September 28 and 29, 1941, 33,771 Jews were slaughtered in the Babi Yar valley and their bodies were then bulldozed and covered with earth.

In October 1966, a granite obelisk was erected at the site of the mass execution, memorializing the slaughter of over 30,000 Soviet citizens. For years, Edgar Bronfman, president of the World Jewish Congress, had tried to get the Soviet Union to recognize that these were not just Soviet citizens, but they were Soviet citizens who happened to be Jewish.

I knew nothing of these events. When I arrived at Babi Yar, there was the granite obelisk and a Jewish monument, as well as a large menorah. I assumed the Prime Minister wanted me to know that the non-recognition had been rectified.

It's important to set aside time to remember all these victims whose lives were taken by the Nazis. In remembering, we bear witness to what these men, women and children endured.

Tragically, other genocides have followed since World War II in Cambodia, Rwanda, Darfur and in the former Yugoslavia. It's evident that we must continue our struggle to keep alive the spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights approved by the United Nations 64 years ago in the shadow of the Holocaust. The declaration recognizes the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family as a foundation of freedom, justice and peace throughout the world. It called on the world to protect human rights by the rule of law. We are indeed fortunate to live in Canada and in Ontario, but we must never take our good fortune

for granted. We must guard our democratic institutions and democratic freedoms. We must appreciate, nurture and protect them, and we must constantly remind ourselves how easy it is to lose them.

On Yom ha-Shoah, Jewish communities around the world recite a brief traditional mourners' prayer, the Kaddish. On the evening of April 18, some of our members were at Beth Tzedec synagogue for the annual Holocaust community commemoration service, and there were hundreds of people who recited the Kaddish.

I want to continue our tradition of saying Kaddish in memory of those people whose *yahrzeit* is unknown. On behalf of the victims, the survivors and their families, I would like to recite that Hebrew prayer that is something for which all people may pray. I ask for unanimous consent to allow me to do that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from York Centre has asked for unanimous consent to recite the Jewish prayer. Agreed? We would rise.

Prayer in Hebrew.

Mr. Monte Kwinter: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, there's one line in this prayer that translates as, "He who creates peace in His celestial heights, may he create peace for us." We must always remember, so that the world will never forget.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As a point of deflection, I believe it was intended for the honourees today. Thank you.

The member for Thornhill.

1350

Mr. Peter Shurman: I rise today on behalf of the official opposition to pay tribute to those survivors honoured by the Premier and by our province today. This is a ceremony that I have had the privilege to attend each and every year since arriving at Queen's Park, and indeed it has been my honour.

There are a range of very personal reasons for me to speak on this subject and for me to attend with my colleagues when we remember those lost in the Holocaust and when we honour our survivors.

I have a middle name. It is Emil, pronounced in the German way. My late father was German-born. His name was Fritz, but that quickly changed to Fred when he came to Canada. In any event, the name I proudly carry, Emil, memorializes my grandfather, my dad's father, Emil Shuermann, a man I only know by the sepia photo mounted in a frame and displayed with other family memorabilia and photos on a credenza in my home.

Emil Shuermann and his wife, my grandmother, Elfriede Shuermann, died of starvation in a camp called Theresienstadt.

Some years ago, I visited the Yad Vashem Memorial in Israel. Many of you have done so. When you enter that dimly lit and very solemn area filled with ashes, you feel the breath leave your body; you cannot help it. And if you have a family history like my own, you cannot escape the question you ask only in your own mind: "Are

my relatives here?" The answer, in a very real way, is, "Yes, they are." Memorials are entirely about that.

The six million Jews who died at the hands of the Nazis don't rest in neat graveyards with headstones where we can visit when the spirit moves us. So we create an ability to keep them in our thoughts, to keep their spirits alive by building a Yad Vashem Memorial in Israel or, right here in Toronto, a memorial like the one in Earl Bales Park, and we remember. In fact, the Holocaust is memorialized in law here in Ontario, as my colleague has said, as a direct result of the work of my PC colleague Ted Chudleigh, the member for Halton, who did that in 1997 in this chamber.

Today at Queen's Park, we have paid tribute to survivors, people who went through hell, eventually to arrive on our shores to rebuild shattered dreams, to have families, to take up their professions, to build businesses, to make new lives.

And now it is 2012. World War II ended 67 years ago. So even the youngest survivor, at this point, is part of an elderly and dwindling group that remains with us. In a few short years, we'll have to honour only their memory, but today we can still pay tribute to living people whose indomitable spirit and canniness kept them going until they were finally liberated.

Our task—in Hebrew it would be called a *mitzvah*—is to tell and retell their story, because the story itself is not only one of courage and will under horrific circumstances; it is about unspeakable inhumanity on a scale never witnessed before or since. However, under the aegis of regional war, civil war, ethnic cleansing or whatever term you wish to apply, genocide indeed does still exist.

One would have thought that Hitler's so-called final solution would have put an end to the hideous thought that any one race or class of people is somehow inferior to another. Sadly, we know the answer to that is, "not yet." I use that term by way of reminding myself and each of you that "not yet" means that someday we shall succeed. It is through a continuous effort and acts of remembrance and tribute that we persevere in this work.

For the rest of my life, my pledge is to remember all of you honoured here today and to remember all of your families, your friends, your comrades, who paid the ultimate price in the camps of Europe, not in vain but so that others might never repeat the heinous acts perpetrated on the Jews of Europe, and so that no other group may ever be singled out for annihilation anywhere, at any time, or for any reason. Never again.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further comment? The member from Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a privilege to speak again on this Yom Ha-Shoah and to recognize those who are here who are survivors, those who are ancestors and, my colleagues from Thornhill and also York Centre, to recognize those as well.

I speak not as a Jew; I'm a gentile. In fact, I'm a United Church minister. So as a gentile and as a United Church minister, the very first words that should be out

of my mouth and out of many mouths is, "Mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa," which is not, of course, Hebrew; it's Latin. It just means "My grievous sin, my most grievous sin," because the first words out of a gentile's mouth should be, "Sorry, sorry, absolutely sorry."

I'll tell you why, as Canadians, we must say that over and over again to those who have survived and to their ancestors. First of all, in 1939, a ship arrived in Canada. It was called the SS St. Louis. It carried many Jews from Europe, and it was refused. It was turned back. Some 5,000 Jews that day went back to what we can only imagine as an absolute nightmare. Possibly all were killed. We did that. We Canadians did that. We also had one of the worst records in the world of receiving countries for accepting those who were fleeing Nazi Germany. We did that. We Canadians did that.

Speaking as a Christian, I can say that the Confessing Church in Germany—it was a church of a mere 1% or 2% of all Christians—actually stood up. People like Dietrich Bonhoeffer stood up—most paid with their lives—on behalf of their Jewish brothers and sisters. The vast majority of the Christian church in Germany hung Nazi flags, and people walked past them and worshipped them as well as the God they came to give homage to. So we did that too.

Now in my community we are accepting refugees from the Roma community. Roma were also massacred by the millions in the death camps in Nazi Germany. Now we have a chance to welcome them as well. So, again, it's a chance to say to another group touched by this, "I'm sorry. Mea culpa, mea culpa."

The member across, from York Centre, mentioned that there were also, of course, people who had a different sexual orientation. There were also people of disability. We had Community Living here today. The disabled were among those who were massacred as well. But, of course, the numbers pale in comparison to the number of Jews.

I went to Huron Street public school. In those days, it was a mainly Jewish—some Italian—school. Most of my friends lived in and around the Spadina area. That was a Jewish area. When I'd go to the bar mitzvahs and the bat mitzvahs back then, I would sit with my friends and I would witness their grandparents with numbers on their arms. So it was very near and very close in those days, as it's near and close today.

So that we can prevent it from ever happening again, we have to at least admit what we've done. In all religions, and in the Christian religion too, there's an order of service. First you say you're sorry and then you get forgiven, but first you say you're sorry. My role here today is to do just that.

I'm, of course, proud that it was the New Democratic Party that started this tradition in this House. I'm proud of that. That aside, I'm proud of a joint bill—the first joint bill, I think, in Canada—that the Speaker himself initiated that was a tri-party bill that recognized the Holodomor as a genocide. I'm proud of that too. I'm proud of much of the work that we do here together.

But—the big "but"—my role here is to say to my colleagues who are Jewish, and to all Jews and to all survivors today: I am sorry; mea culpa. That's the only way that it will ever never happen again.

1400

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): To the members that spoke today, thank you for your very passionate words. To the entire House, thank you for participating in the activities today. To the honourees, again on behalf of the entire House, our congratulations and thanks for carrying the black spot in your heart for all these years and for making a success of the province of Ontario.

It is now time for petitions.

PETITIONS

GREENBELT

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was almost ready; out of respect, I was listening.

I'm pleased to present a petition from my riding of Durham which reads as follows:

"Whereas the Greenbelt Act was passed by the Ontario Legislature in 2005, affecting property rights in Ontario; and

"Whereas the right to own, use, enjoy and the opportunity to earn a living from private property is the basis of freedom and democracy; and

"Whereas the greenbelt restricts property owners in the use, enjoyment and ability to earn a living from their private property; and

"Whereas property owners are not being compensated for" the loss of their rights;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend" the Greenbelt Act "at the 10-year re-evaluation in 2015 to allow additional development when requested by" communities and supported by both environmental studies and by the local municipality, unlike the current government's plan of exempting municipalities from their duty to protect their communities under the Green Energy Act.

I'm pleased to sign and support this and present it Dia.

RADIATION SAFETY

Mr. Reza Moridi: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas subsection 6(2)8 of the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act identifies dental hygienists as persons deemed to be qualified to operate an X-ray machine; and

"Whereas dental hygienists in independent practice need to be able to prescribe X-rays and to be designated as radiation protection officers in order to provide their clients with safe and convenient access to a medically necessary procedure, as is already the case in many comparable jurisdictions;

"We, the dental hygienists in independent practice, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To express support for the motion filed on April 17, 2012, by the member from Richmond Hill that asks the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to establish a committee consisting of experts to review the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act (1990) and its regulations and make recommendations on how to modernize this act and bring it to 21st-century standards, so that it becomes responsive to the safety of patients and the public and to include all forms of radiation that are currently used in the health care sector for diagnostic and therapeutic purposes."

I fully agree with this petition. I'll sign it and give it to page Sabrina to deliver it to the desk.

RAIL LINES

Mr. John Yakubuski: I have a petition signed by several hundred people in my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Canadian Pacific Railway has begun lifting rails on its line between Smiths Falls and Mattawa; and

"Whereas once the rail is gone it will never be replaced; and

"Whereas the still-intact Pembroke–Mattawa section of the line is essential to the economic development of the upper Ottawa Valley; and

"Whereas the Pembroke–Mattawa section is a key element of the shortest rail link between eastern and western Canada; and

"Whereas the Pembroke–Mattawa section is a key element of the only alternative all-Canadian rail route to the heavily loaded Canadian Pacific Railway and Canadian National Railway main lines through Toronto; and

"Whereas rail is the most energy-efficient and least polluting mode of land transportation, and these advantages will increase as the fuel costs of land transportation continue to rise;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To do everything in its power to ensure that the rails between Pembroke and Mattawa remain in place."

I support this petition, I affix my name to it, and I want to thank Mike Stephens for all the work he and his committee did in getting this petition together, and I send it down with William.

DOG OWNERSHIP

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas currently the law takes the onus off of owners that raise violent dogs by making it appear that violence is a matter of genetics; and

"Whereas the Dog Owners' Liability Act does not clearly define a pit bull, nor is it enforced equally across the province, as pit bulls are not an acknowledged breed;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly passes Bill 16, Public Safety Related to Dogs Statute Law Amendment Act, 2011, into law."

I couldn't agree more—for the 1,000 dogs that have died. I'm going to give it to Shaumik to be delivered.

RADIATION SAFETY

Mr. Joe Dickson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas subsection 6(2)8 of the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act identifies dental hygienists as persons deemed to be qualified to operate an X-ray machine; and

"Whereas dental hygienists in independent practice need to be able to prescribe X-rays and to be designated as radiation protection officers in order to provide their clients with safe and convenient access to a medically necessary procedure, as is already the case in many comparable jurisdictions;

"We, the dental hygienists in independent practice, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To express support for the motion filed on April 17, 2012, by the member from Richmond Hill that asks the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to establish a committee consisting of experts to review the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act (1990) and its regulations and make recommendations on how to modernize this act and bring it to 21st-century standards, so that it becomes responsive to the safety of patients and the public and to include all forms of radiation that are currently used in the health care sector for diagnostic and therapeutic purposes."

I will pass this petition to page Jenny and sign it appropriately, as I agree with it.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Mr. Rick Nicholls: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Bill 13 is unnecessary as an anti-bullying measure because Ontarians already have Bill 157; and

"Whereas Bill 13 promotes radical revisions to school instruction on sex and gender that a majority of parents do not support; and

"Whereas Bill 13 fails to provide any protection for students of faith or students of distinct physical characteristics;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To vote against Bill 13 or to so amend Bill 13 as to equally protect all students, including students of faith."

I approve this petition, and I will sign my name, and give it to our legislative page Manak.

TAXATION

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this very short petition from the people of Nickel Belt, and it reads as follows:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario" to "immediately exempt electricity from the harmonized sales tax."

I fully agree with this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Ranbir to bring it to the Clerk.

EASTERN ONTARIO DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Phil McNeely: This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the community of Orléans will be hit hard with the movement of 10,000 jobs from downtown to Kanata;

"Whereas the eastern Ontario development fund is designed to help businesses create new jobs and invest in new technologies, equipment and skills training...

"Whereas another goal of the eastern Ontario development fund is to support economic development projects that will attract or retain investment in Ontario-based industries and communities; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has pledged to continue the EODF past its original four-year mandate;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request that the Legislature ensure that the eastern Ontario development fund extends to the geographic area including Orléans to assist job growth in the face of a federal decision to dramatically affect the sustainability of areas east of the downtown core of Ottawa, including Orléans."

I support this petition and send it forward with Noah.

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the price of gas is reaching historic price levels and is expected to increase another 15% in the near future, yet oil prices" continue to drop; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government has done nothing to protect consumers from high gas prices; and

"Whereas the high and unstable gas prices across Ontario have caused confusion and unfair hardship to Ontario drivers while also impacting the Ontario economy in key sectors such as tourism and transportation; and

"Whereas the high price of gas has a detrimental impact on all aspects of our already troubled economy and substantially increases the price of delivered commodities, adding further burden to Ontario consumers; 1410

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and urge the Premier to take action to protect consumers from the burden of high gas prices in Ontario."

I affix my signature in full support.

AIR-RAIL LINK

Mr. Jonah Schein: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas diesel trains are a health hazard for people who live near them;

"Whereas more toxic fumes will be created by the 400 daily trains than the car trips they are meant to replace;

"Whereas the planned air-rail link does not serve the communities through which it passes and will be priced beyond the reach of most commuters;

"Whereas all major cities in the world with train service between their downtown core and the airport use electric trains;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario stop building the air-rail link for diesel and move to electrify the route immediately;

"That the air-rail link be designed, operated" and funded "as an affordable transportation option between all points along its route."

I support this bill. I affix my name to it and I give it to page Manak to present.

GO TRANSIT

Ms. Laurie Scott: "To the Premier and Legislature of the province of Ontario:

"The city of Kawartha Lakes is the chosen home of the largest per capita population of senior citizens in the province of Ontario; and

"There is an inability to attract a sufficient number of primary caregivers to service this population, causing many to travel to the greater Toronto area to seek medical attention; and

"The city of Kawartha Lakes is the proud home of Sir Sandford Fleming College (Frost campus), which attracts students from across the province who are unable to access the provincial rail link in the city of Oshawa; and

"Students from the city of Kawartha Lakes travel across this province to various institutions of higher learning and are unable to access transportation from the city of Oshawa to the city of Kawartha Lakes (town of Lindsay); and

"A large number of citizens of the city of Kawartha Lakes are required to travel daily to the greater Toronto area to avail themselves of employment opportunities that are not available locally; and

"The province of Ontario has a stated policy to improve air quality through the reduction of traffic on provincial highways by the provision of mass transit;

"We, the undersigned citizens of the city of Kawartha Lakes, petition the Ontario government to provide, as soon as possible, a direct GO Transit link from the town of Lindsay, in the said city of Kawartha Lakes, to the city of Oshawa; and

"We ask you, Laurie Scott, MPP for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, to carry this petition on our behalf to the provincial Legislature."

I'm happy to hand it over to page Sarah. I affix my signature, and thank again Fred Barnes for gathering them.

TOURISM

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I have a petition from the constituents of Thunder Bay–Atikokan which reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas tourism is a vital contributor to the economy of northwestern Ontario, bringing hundreds of millions of dollars into the province’s economy from other provinces and the United States, unlike other regions in the province whose target demographic is people who already reside in Ontario;

“Whereas northwestern Ontario’s tourist economy has been under attack by government policies such as the cancellation of the spring bear hunt, the harmonized sales tax (HST), the strong Canadian dollar and difficulties passing through the Canada/United States border; and

“Whereas studies have shown that tourism in the northwest nets significantly more money per stay than other regions of the province, in part due to visitors frequenting historical sites, parks and roadside attractions that they learn about through travel information centres;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“To keep the travel information centres in Fort Frances, Kenora and Rainy River open permanently to ensure that northwestern Ontario maximizes the benefit of our tourist economy.”

I proudly support this and will give this to Constantine.

WATER QUALITY

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

Applause.

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to everyone in the House. This particular petition will be good for my rural colleagues.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas we, the non-profit organizations ... of Cumberland village, which include St. Andrew’s United Church, St. Margaret Mary Catholic Church, St. Mark’s Anglican Church, Cumberland Lions Club, Cumberland Curling Club [and] Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama’ at Centre, request that the small drinking water systems testing requirements for non-profit organizations (NPOs), MOE regulation 413/09, be amended to allow NPOs to have water testing done at existing public laboratories at no cost. Provincially designated private laboratory costs are excessive and prohibitive to Ontario’s NPOs;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Please amend regulation 413/09 as outlined above.”

I agree with the petition, and I will affix my signature and give it to page Georgia.

UTILITY CHARGES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Cambridge.

Mr. Rob Leone: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thought I was going to have an opportunity, since he questioned whether he liked you or not—the member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

Anyway, this is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas section 398(2) of the Municipal Act ... allows a municipality to add public utility arrears incurred by a tenant to the municipal tax bill of the owner; and

“Whereas Ontario regulation 581/06 permits such arrears to have priority lien status under the act; and

“Whereas these provisions reversed the long-standing law in this area that held that a landlord was not responsible for utility charges where the landlord was not the consumer; and

“Whereas landlords may now be burdened unfairly, and potentially catastrophically, with fees and charges they have no control over; and

“Whereas these provisions will also impact tenants who are not in arrears with their utility payments but who will now face rent increases and/or increases in utility payments where such payments are pooled as landlords attempt to recoup these outstanding liabilities; and

“Whereas a number of municipalities, including Penetanguishene, Bracebridge and Niagara Falls, have reversed such policies as a result of the demonstrated and unprecedented negative impacts on landlords and tenants; and

“Whereas municipalities and utility providers in Ontario already have at their disposal a number of means by which they can control or collect outstanding arrears, including by requiring deposits for the utility service pursuant to the Public Utilities Act and by seizing personal property in the possession of the ratepayer;

“Now therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

“Repeal section 398(2) of the Municipal Act, 2001, and amend Ontario regulation 581/06 accordingly, to ensure that property owners are not responsible for the payment of outstanding utility arrears where they are not the consumer.”

I agree with the petition, and I will hand it to page Manak.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

LABOUR RELATIONS AMENDMENT ACT

(FAIRNESS FOR EMPLOYEES), 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR
LES RELATIONS DE TRAVAIL
(ÉQUITÉ À L’ÉGARD DES EMPLOYÉS)

Mr. Natyshak moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 77, An Act to amend the Labour Relations Act, 1995 with respect to enhancing fairness for employees /

Projet de loi 77, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur les relations de travail en vue d'accroître l'équité à l'égard des employés.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Mr. Speaker, thank you. I think members of the House can tell that this is my first private member's bill, and I'm very proud to introduce it today.

En français : ça me donne un grand plaisir, un énorme plaisir et honneur, de présenter ce projet de loi, mon premier comme membre privé, et I am exceptionally proud to have members of the Ontario Federation of Labour here today in the gallery to support this initiative.

Mr. Speaker, the act is subtitled Fairness for Employees. Before I get into the specifics of the act, I'd like to provide a little bit of context, a little history of labour relations in this province, if you will. In 1995, the government of the day, the Mike Harris government, passed something called the Labour Relations and Employment Statute Law Amendment Act. The act effectively wiped out 50 years of progressive labour law tradition in Ontario, and it has had a corrosive effect on labour relations in this province ever since.

I want to repeat that. I want to repeat what I just said, because it is at the heart of our argument here today. In that 1995 act, the progressive legacy in labour law that existed under Premiers such as John Robarts, Bill Davis and David Peterson was wiped out in one fell swoop. What we're trying to do here today with this bill is to begin to take the very first steps back towards resuming that progressive tradition, the tradition presided over by Premiers Robarts, Davis and Peterson, with a very modest set of reforms.

Now, some of you may remember the 1995 Mike Harris labour act as a corrective to some of the labour reforms passed in the 1990s, but the Harris act went far beyond that by destroying the fundamental structure of the Ontario labour relations, which, since the 1940s, had recognized the imperative to stop employers from interfering with the right of working people to exercise their democratic right to join a union. In fact, the 1995 act introduced destructive American labour law practices and did so in a manner that repudiated a set of balanced, made-in-Ontario labour law traditions going back 50 years. That act effectively destroyed Ontario's tradition of civilized labour legislation, and that's pretty much where we are here today.

1420

But enough history. Here's what we're proposing in this act. Firstly, the act deals with successor rights in the contract sector. Currently, the act includes provisions governing successor rights when a business is sold. This bill amends the act to extend the rules to the contract sector. Essentially, what we're doing here is providing a little more protection for some of our most vulnerable workers when a business is sold. We're talking about cleaners, food service employees and the folks who work in laundry facilities.

Secondly, the act makes some very modest changes in the interest arbitration procedure for a first contract. Currently, parties who are unable to effect a first collective agreement may apply to the Ontario Labour Relations Board to direct the settlement of a first collective agreement by arbitration. The bill amends the act to provide an additional route to binding arbitration.

Basically, what it does is it allows either party to request first-agreement arbitration if no collective agreement has been entered into by 30 days after it becoming legal for the employees to strike or for the employer to lock them out.

Thirdly, the act makes some small changes in reinstatement procedures during an organizing campaign. Basically, too many employees are getting fired during organizing campaigns. The provision in the act would better protect employees from employer reprisals, especially part-time employees.

Fourthly, the act requires early disclosure of employee lists—the folks who would be eligible to be part of a bargaining unit. What we're doing here is permitting a trade union to ask the Ontario Labour Relations Board to direct an employer to provide the trade union with a list of employees in a bargaining unit that could be appropriate for collective bargaining when the board is convinced that a threshold of 20% of the employees have expressed a desire to form a union. That sounds pretty reasonable to me.

Finally, the act makes possible neutral off-site voting and telephone and electronic voting for certification. Currently, the act sets out procedures for representation votes, when a trade union applies for certification as a bargaining agent. The bill amends the act to provide that the board may direct that representation votes be held at a neutral site or be conducted electronically or by telephone.

In summary, Mr. Speaker, I think that it is the belief of every member of this Legislature that Ontario workers deserve to be able to exercise their democratic rights without fear of employer reprisal. The truth is that current Ontario labour law simply doesn't allow that.

We desperately need to bring balance back to the Ontario Labour Relations Act and give vulnerable workers the tools to lift themselves out of poverty. That is a long-term goal, but on this side of the house, we recognize that that project is very long-term; that this bill is just the first small step towards that end. The Fairness for Employees Act takes very few, modest, uncontroversial reforms that we believe have widespread support, and we should get them to committee, where they can be examined thoroughly.

People on the other side of the House will notice that card certification is not included in this bill. We on this side of the House—and myself in particular, being a member who was certified under the provisions of card-based certification—strongly support card-based certification as one means of certifying a bargaining unit. But I have to be honest: Despite being in place under Conservative, Liberal and NDP governments in Ontario,

card certification is a controversial subject in this province.

Nor will you find any mention of banning replacement workers in this package. And I'll be honest again: We on this side of this House feel very strongly that replacement workers, more commonly known as scabs, should not be allowed in this province's workplaces during a lawful strike.

It was very, very hard for us to introduce a set of labour relations reforms without including anti-scab provisions. But as I said, this package is not about controversy, and banning replacement workers is a controversial topic in this province, so we purposely left it out. In fact, we left a lot of things out of this package so that we could have all-party support and get these things off to committee, where the modest proposals we are putting forward can have a thorough going-over.

So I repeat: The issue before this House is not whether you are pro-labour, anti-labour or somewhere in between; it's about whether these very modest reforms get to committee where they can be studied in detail. If the majority of committee members decide, in their wisdom, to make amendments to this act, well, that's the democratic process. No bill is perfect, and I kind of doubt that this bill is an exception to that rule. However, that's not what this House will be voting on at 4:30 this afternoon. Getting these modest proposals to committee so that labour groups, employer groups and neutral labour relations experts can have their kick at this legislation is what it's about.

The question before this House this afternoon is this: Do we take the first small steps toward resuming the progressive labour law tradition of John Robarts, Bill Davis and David Peterson, or do we stay where we are in the acrimonious, unbalanced world of labour relations that Mike Harris left us? Make no mistake: When you cast your vote at 4:30 this afternoon, that is what you will be voting on. I therefore urge everyone in the House to vote second reading approval of this very modest bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Hillier: I'm quite surprised that the Minister of Labour wasn't responding to this private member's bill today, seeing that the minister is indeed in the House listening to this debate.

I have to start off by saying that I think the member for Essex has a different dictionary than I and others have when he uses the words, about Bill 77, that it is "enhancing fairness for employees." When I hear the term "fairness," I think of freedom, justice. I think of privacy. I believe in due process, respect for democracy—things of that nature.

This bill compels employers to provide personal information about employees to a third party who may wish to have an agreement or a contract, but a third party with no ties to those employees or to the business they're employed in. I think it's a really dangerous slope to be on when a business can be compelled by a third party to release such private and important information. It's not

just the person's name, but also their address, their contact information, their job classification, the number of hours of work and any other information they may deem appropriate to find.

This also doesn't have any safeguards in it whatsoever for the protection of democratic ideals when it comes to secret ballots and the necessity for secret ballots when voting on collective agreements. This allows telephone voting and online voting, but doesn't prescribe any levels of security for those types of voting. It certainly can be left to significant potential abuse of privacy and the results when there aren't prescribed methods to protect that privacy and that information.

The member spoke about how this would protect employees from their employers during the certification process. I'd like to just mention to the member and to the House that it's not employees needing protection just from employers. Here's an article from March 14 in the *Toronto Star*, where 13 members of LIUNA Local 183 are being ejected from their union. Their union cards are being withheld so they'll not be able to work on any construction projects. And that follows an earlier one in February where two others—there had been a number of fights and scuffles at LIUNA. Of course, I know the member knows this as, prior to politics, he was director of training at LIUNA.

Maybe I should restate, just for the record, that unions are just another business. We safeguard people by putting checks and balances in things, not by skewing the workplace with legislation.

1430

I'll say for the record here: Back in 1995, the US Department of Justice prosecuted LIUNA bosses for racketeering and ties to organized crime. Some 35 officials were sentenced—57 embezzlement charges; 46 criminal charges. To give organizations that blanket authority to go in and demand private information from individuals with no checks and balances on what they can do with it, we do allow and maybe actually create a situation where wrongdoing will happen.

I will state it for the record as well that these processes for certification can be, and indeed are, abused, as the legislation sits today. Speak to Gary Oosterhof at Oosterhof Electric in Kingston and he'll tell you about the tragedy of the certification process in his shop. Or speak to Good Mechanical in Smith Falls, Ontario; or Bergeron contractors in Sudbury; or Sculland Electric in Almonte, Ontario—I could go on—Power-Tek Electrical in Ottawa. All these people have been subjected to vigorous abuses in the certification processes that we have today, such as card-based certification.

A bill like this will only exasperate that problem. It will allow unions to have significant, unchecked power over the information and the voting process in certification processes. We do need to have fairness, but that fairness can only be achieved by respecting privacy, protecting freedom of choice and ensuring that due processes are prescribed within the legislation so that wrongdoing can be prevented.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I want to thank the member from Essex for introducing this bill and for engaging in the debate on this issue.

We recognize that fair and balanced labour laws have been the foundation for the province's prosperity for decades. That is why our government has worked hard to restore the principles of balance and fairness to Ontario's labour laws. Productive labour relations are key to economic growth, productivity and prosperity, and give Ontario a competitive advantage.

Over the past eight years, our government has worked hard to rebuild the relationships that were damaged by the governments that came before us. Our government stands by our record of labour peace and productivity in Ontario.

Through hard work, we have restored fairness, balance, dignity and productivity to labour relations in our province. With the co-operation of both employees and employers, we have succeeded. I'm proud that almost 98% of labour contracts in Ontario are now settled without disruptions.

I want to commend the individuals who represent employers and unions that work together at the negotiating table to develop an agreement that reflects the needs of both. Agreements reached at the negotiating table are the best agreements—the most stable and the most productive.

That's the cornerstone of Ontario's economic success. During labour disputes, this government has been focused on assisting the parties with the collective bargaining process because it's a shared responsibility.

The Ministry of Labour has a highly skilled mediation and conciliation team with a tremendous record for helping to resolve disputes. They work tirelessly to bring the parties together and help find the common ground which leads to healthy negotiations. Our government believes that fair and balanced labour laws are the foundation for the province's prosperity.

I would like to take a look at the past legislative changes, if you would allow me. I know that the member from Essex has mentioned a few of them.

In 1993, Bill 40 made significant changes to the then Labour Relations Act, including banning replacement workers, expanding access to first-contract arbitration, providing just cause protection after certification and during bargaining for renewal of a collective agreement, and requiring expedited hearings for certain unfair labour practice complaints.

Key elements of Bill 40 were repealed by Bill 7 in 1995, which repealed the Labour Relations Act in its entirety and replaced it with a new act, the Labour Relations Act, 1995.

Over the years, labour stakeholders have routinely urged a return to Bill 40's approach in certain areas. The most recent significant amendments to the Labour Relations Act were in 2005, under the Labour Relations Statute Law Amendment Act, Bill 144. Among other

things, the legislation restored certain key powers of the Ontario Labour Relations Board, particularly in the area of union certification and the ability to make certain types of substantive interim orders. That's why we restored the principles of balance and fairness to Ontario's labour laws with the introduction of Bill 144 in 2005.

This bill restored powers to the Ontario Labour Relations Board to let it effectively handle situations where an employer or a union violates labour law during a union organizing campaign. The bill ensures that an employer who threatens, terminates or intimidates employees who are trying to form a union can be taken before the Labour Relations Board.

Bill 144 restored the Ontario Labour Relations Board power to make certain types of substantive interim orders; specifically, the Ontario Labour Relations Board can make interim orders reinstating a dismissed employee, restoring terms and conditions of employment that were changed by the employer, and redressing discipline imposed by the employer.

Thanks to our government, the Ontario Labour Relations Board is now able to order the interim reinstatement of employees fired during an organizing drive. And in response to the worst cases of employer misconduct, the Ontario Labour Relations Board has the power to immediately certify the union. The restoration of these powers helps to ensure that the certification process works fairly for both the employees and employers.

I want to thank the member for Essex for introducing this bill and for engaging in the debate on the issue. I think he brings forward some very positive points in a number of proposals that would require some further analysis if they should be undertaken. But many of them are very positive. So that would be needed to determine if any policy, any legal or operational issues were there, and would need to be considered by the ministry or by the government.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I want to thank my colleague from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington for sharing his expertise in Ontario's labour industry with regards to this bill. I think his advice should be well taken.

Speaker, it is my understanding that labour unions were first formed to protect workplace employees from coercion or abuse by their employers. It seems odd to me, now in modern day, descendants should now be pressing for legislation that once again exposes their members to undue invasions of privacy and, heaven forbid, a reduction in the transparency of union voting systems.

First, this bill seeks to allow a minority of workers to gain access to information about their colleagues that is currently, and should remain, strictly private. For example, in a workplace of, say, 107 employees, it would take a minority of just 21 people—that's 20%—to demonstrate a desire for a union—a demand of private information of every one of us here. That information would include the employees' names, departments, job

titles and the number of hours per week that they work, and, curiously, any other information specified by the board in its direction. The sheer vagaries of that stipulation boggle the mind.

This is about more than simply a small minority helping itself to the personal information of the majority on a whim. It's about the employee-employer relationship, something that I've spoken about in this House in the past. It would begin to dissolve the relationship that has been formed by a boss and his or her staff, perhaps over years of work, in the interests of an exceedingly small minority whose desire for a union may not be the same as the 80% of their colleagues.

1440

Second, Speaker, we know that this bill would change the normal procedure for representation votes. No longer would votes take place at the workplace, where access for workers is a legally protected right. No, it would stipulate that votes must now take place outside of the workplace at a location where the right of entry is not protected by law.

Further, it allows for voting to take place electronically or by telephone. Speaker, I must point out to the House that with all of the technologies available to us today, we still have not sought to tinker with our provincial voting system to such a tremendous degree, and why? I suspect that it's because electronic and telephone voting are still very much open to tampering and abuse of privacy. Imagine going to vote with your family in a provincial or federal election. Do you not feel safer knowing that every other voter must undergo the same procedure you are?

Showing up in person, having your vote subject to the strictest privacy guidelines, conducting votes in designated locations staffed by impartial officials—these are all hallmarks of a safe, secure voting process that are never tampered with by necessity. Yes, voting can be an irritant—it means waiting in lines and filling out forms—but the wait time isn't like that of our health care system. But whether the issue is a federal election or a union vote that will directly affect your paycheque, our democratic society must keep these safeguards in place, not eliminate them.

Finally, this bill would allow both sides of the collective agreement bargaining process to proceed straight to arbitration, if desired, by bypassing the crucial first step of negotiating in good faith. I think it should be clear to anybody that this is a wrong-headed move. Despite the friction that inevitably arises from these processes, an initial sit-down on both sides for a vigorous negotiation session still provides a clear understanding of the needs on both sides, much like we're doing right now.

I greatly respect my colleague the member for Essex. We share a segment of southwestern Ontario that has some of the best workers in the nation. Yet the opportunity for abuse by a small minority is just simply too great. Workers have a right to privacy, they have a right not to be subject to the will of a small minority, and they have a right to peace of mind when it comes to casting

their ballot in workplace matters. This bill would strike a very serious blow to all three, and I must oppose it in the strongest terms.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member for Hamilton Centre—the leader of the third party.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you very much, Speaker. I appreciate that.

Speaker, I want to start by acknowledging some friends from the labour movement who are here, including the president of the Ontario Federation of Labour, Mr. Sid Ryan.

Applause.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Yes, absolutely. They're here for a particular reason, obviously: to hear the debate on this bill.

I think it's quite interesting to listen to what has been said around the room so far. I first want to say that this is not the typical type of bill that New Democrats have brought in the past in terms of labour law reform. It's not the typical kind of bill that New Democrats have brought in the past for a specific reason: because this is not the typical kind of Legislature that we've had in the province of Ontario. What we have now is a Legislature that has an opportunity to find ways to work together, to move some of the yardsticks, and that's what this bill tries to do.

I found it very interesting that the member from York South-Weston was talking about balance and fairness. We know very well just by the remarks that the member for Essex made at the beginning of his speech that the playing field has changed drastically in Ontario. It has changed drastically and has remained drastically unbalanced for many, many years. In fact, it was much more balanced under former Conservative governments, former Liberal governments and former NDP governments. So I think if we're seriously talking about returning things to balance and fairness, we need to look at what some of that balance and fairness has been in the past, and that's what this bill does—not all of it, mind you; not all of the balance and fairness that we think needs to be there is captured in this bill. Why? Because we came at this in a very practical way, in a way that says there are things that we firmly believe in that we know that this government, the McGuinty Liberal government, has refused to enact the many, many times we've brought these things forward—things like card-based certification, for example. We have brought bills on card-based certification many, many times. You'll note that it is not in this bill; it's not in this bill on purpose.

We have brought bills to get rid of scabs once and for all in this province many, many times—and proudly—but this bill does not have anything about that in it, not because the member from Essex doesn't want it in there, not because New Democrats don't want it in there, because we do want it in there, and we will probably bring those bills as well at some point, as we've done proudly in the past. But with this particular bill, we're

actually appealing to the members of the government and to the members of the Progressive Conservative Party to consider moving some of the yardsticks, to consider moving a little way down a path to making labour relations, to making the playing field, if you will, in terms of the process of certification of unions and other things, a little more balanced.

I'm not going to go over the specifics. They have to do with first-contract arbitration, they have to do with making sure that certain sectors are able to have their bargaining rights carry on after employer changes. For the employees, it talks about making sure that people who organize or who are doing part of the organizing drive, when a union is brought into a place of employment, are not reprimanded by the employer, that they're actually reinstated to work if those reprimands take place; and the provision of lists to make sure that it is fair, that an employer can't load up a list at the end of the process and keep away from the union a bunch of information that is necessary for an effective and fair organizing drive.

Speaker, these are modest proposals, they are thoughtful proposals, they are reasonable proposals, and in that spirit of trying to find some balance and fairness and in that spirit of a minority situation where there is opportunity for parties to reach across and work together to make this province a better place for working people, I ask that the members of this House of all parties at least get this bill through second reading so it can go to committee and we can have some positive steps forward, some positive movement on the labour relations situation here in Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Phil McNeely: This act would amend legislation to permit a trade union to ask the Ontario Labour Relations Board to direct an employer to provide a trade union with a list of employees in a bargaining unit that could be appropriate for collective bargaining.

Currently, the act sets out procedures for representation votes when a trade union applies for certification as a bargaining agent. The act is amended to provide that the board may direct that representation votes be held at a neutral site, electronically or by telephone.

Our government is making thoughtful choices to build a stronger economy that supports Ontario families and their jobs. The choices we're making support the goals, needs and aspirations of Ontario families. We stand by our record of labour peace and productivity in Ontario over the past eight years. We have worked hard to rebuild the relationships that were damaged by the governments that came before us.

Since 2003, for example, there have been no teacher strikes and no lost teaching days for our students. In working together with teachers, Ontario is now ranked in the top five education systems in the world, a really truly momentous gain since 2003.

As a government, we've had to work hard to restore fairness, balance, dignity and productivity to labour

relations in Ontario. With the co-operation of both employees and employers, we have succeeded. I'm proud to say that almost 98% of labour contracts in Ontario are now settled without disruptions.

I want to commend the individuals who represent employers and unions that work together at the negotiating table to develop an agreement that reflects the needs of both. Agreements reached at the negotiating table are the best agreements—the most stable and the most productive. That is the cornerstone of Ontario's economic success.

1450

During labour disputes, this government is focused on assisting parties with the collective bargaining process. It's a shared responsibility. We have a highly skilled mediation and conciliation team with a tremendous record for helping to resolve disputes. They work tirelessly to bring the parties together, to help find common ground, which leads to healthy negotiations.

So what has our government done in regard to labour relations, Mr. Speaker? Our government believes that fair and balanced labour laws are the foundation for the province's prosperity. That's why we restored the principles of balance and fairness to Ontario's labour laws with the introduction of Bill 144 in 2005. That bill restored powers to the Ontario Labour Relations Board to let it effectively handle situations where an employer or a union violates labour law during a union organizing campaign.

This bill ensures that an employer who threatens, terminates or intimidates employees who are trying to form a union can be taken before the Labour Relations Board. Thanks to our government, the Ontario Labour Relations Board is now able to order the interim reinstatement of employees fired during an organizing drive.

In response to the worst cases of employer misconduct, the Ontario Labour Relations Board has the power to immediately certify the union. The restoration of these powers helps to ensure that the certification process works fairly for both employees and employers.

Mr. Speaker, let us look at the record of the opposition when they were in government. The PCs turned the labour climate in Ontario to chaos. They tarnished the government's relationships with our teachers and health care workers. Their Labour Relations Act was dubbed "an act to gut the rights of Ontario workers." We remember that. The previous PC government reversed almost half a century of history in revamping the way unions are certified, and labour unrest with teachers led to the loss of 26 million school days—not a good time in our schools.

Let us look at some of the past legislative changes.

In 1993, Bill 40 made significant changes to the then Labour Relations Act, LRA, including:

- banning replacement workers;
- expanding access to first-contract arbitration;
- providing just cause protection after certification and during bargaining for a renewal of a collective agreement;

—requiring expedited hearings for certain unfair labour practice complaints.

Key elements of Bill 40 were repealed by Bill 7 in 1995, which repealed the LRA in its entirety and replaced it with a new act: the Labour Relations Act, 1995.

Over the years, stakeholders have routinely urged a return to Bill 40's approach in certain areas. The most recent significant amendments to the LRA were in 2005, under the Labour Relations Statute Law Amendment Act, 2005, Bill 144. Among other things, the legislation restored certain key powers of the OLRB, particularly in the area of union certification and the ability to make certain types of substantive interim orders.

Mr. Speaker, this government takes labour relations very seriously. We want to work with both sides to make labour relations in this province to the benefit of the people involved and the taxpayers of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure and I take great pride in rising to support my colleague's bill today. What's being suggested today is a very modest approach, and it's a modest approach because we're very serious about taking some positive steps in the right direction. We're serious about doing this, and that's why we call on the support of all parties in this House to address this modest step in the right direction, to address fairness. This is about fairness for employees. It's about fairness for the working people of Ontario.

We need to change the discourse when it comes to labour in Ontario. The discourse shouldn't be, "Am I pro-labour? Am I anti-labour?" It's about working people in Ontario. We need to support people who are working. We need to support them by ensuring that they have the right to organize. This is a democratic right. We need to support that. If employees desire to exercise that right, an employer should not put their jobs at risk, should not put their jobs in jeopardy. That's simply wrong. That's counter to the democratic rights that we want to build in this society. That's counter to the rights of workers who've worked so hard and made so many sacrifices to achieve. That's simply the wrong direction for this province. That's the wrong direction for the discourse on how we treat workers in this province.

The requests are simple, but they are in the spirit of where labour laws were not too long ago. We took a very disastrous turn under the Mike Harris regime, and we need to correct some of those mistakes that have not yet been fixed.

A wise man once said, "You can make a mistake once, but if you don't correct that mistake, you've made another mistake again." Let's not do that. Let's change that direction. Let's move and shift things back in favour of employees.

We've seen too much, in terms of the overall direction of society in the world, that more and more wealth is being kept in the hands of fewer and fewer people. That has to change. There will be a time when their unrest will—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I've been told that maybe your own microphone is not on. You might want to be closer to your own seat and your own mike.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Thank you.

We've seen too much, as time has progressed, that the concentration of wealth is shifting from the middle class, from the working people, more and more into the hands of fewer and fewer people. That's the wrong direction for our society. Unrest will increase. We can't build walls around our cities. We can't build walls around those who are wealthy to protect us. We need to ensure we live in an equitable society where everyone has the opportunity to prosper. That's a society where we can be safe, where we can enjoy freedom and where we can all enjoy prosperity. That's the direction we need to head in, and making a small step in the right direction to achieve greater fairness for employees will ensure that we move in the right direction for our society. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member for Essex to respond.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Sorry, did I miss—the member for Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Sorry, Mr. Speaker. I kind of thought there was some time left on the clock from the other parties.

I wanted to add my voice to what the member from Essex has to say. When he talks about succession rights from business, and when he talks about the small steps he wants to do, he's bringing forward those small steps because there are tons of evidence out there that it is not working.

I would like to give the example from UNITE HERE, who are trying to organize people who work in the hotel industry. They have that big poster. The poster is really telling, because for every picture that they took of people who were helping, trying to help organize their workplace, people who make barely above minimum wage—most of them don't have a full-time job; they work when there's work; none of them have benefits—of all of the pictures that they have taken, all of those people have lost their jobs.

I'll give an example in Ottawa, where this mom has a few kids and her youngest one, unfortunately, came out with childhood leukemia. She needed a little bit of flexibility to bring this child, who's really just a baby, for chemotherapy and other treatment to make him better. So she needed a little bit of flexibility from her employer, and her employer, by and large, had been accommodating her needs. I mean, here she is with a baby who's dying of cancer. The employer was reasonable in allowing her a little bit of flexibility so that she could bring her child to the doctor and to the different appointments.

But you know what happened, Mr. Speaker? The minute that she tried to organize her peers and started to talk about, "Maybe we should join a union. Maybe if we had a union, we would make better than minimum wage. Maybe if we had a union, we would have a little bit more

job security, and some of us who have been here longer would get the good hours, and the new ones who happen to know the boss wouldn't get all of the good shifts. Maybe if we form our union, we could ask for a few little benefits"—the minute she started to talk to her co-workers, the flexibility was gone. If she wanted to take her son to the cancer treatment centre, she would have to do this by quitting her work. This is how she was treated.

What we're trying to bring forward is a little bit of fairness. I can give you a multitude of examples that will show you that what we have now is often failing the most vulnerable of workers in Ontario. The way to help those workers most of the time would be to organize them, to help them form a union that will speak for those workers, most of them women, most of them first-generation immigrants. They need our help. By passing this bill and sending it to committee so we can talk a little bit more, we will help them.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I want to commend my friend from Essex for, I think, a thoughtful piece of work; I know a lot of effort has gone into it. As someone who comes from a family of trade unionists who works in that field, I think my friend from Nickel Belt articulately put out a very good summary of some of the issues involved. The Minister of Labour, I think, has very thoughtfully engaged and identified very positively some parts of the bill that members on this side think would be positive steps forward.

I am hopeful that this bill will get serious discussion at committee. I think there's a lot of value in it, and I think it speaks to the co-operation and reasonableness of the third party that these are areas where we might not agree 100%, but there is substantive enough common ground here for us to work reasonably on it. I think it's awesome that we have newer members like the member from Essex, who brings a great deal of sincerity and intelligence to this Legislature. We should be encouraging newer members to go forward with some of their brighter and better ideas.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

The member for Essex, you have two minutes for a reply.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I want to thank the members from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington—

Mr. Randy Hillier: Really?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I do—Chatham-Kent-Essex, of course, York South-Weston, Hamilton Centre, Ottawa-Orléans, Bramalea-Gore-Malton, Nickel Belt and, of course, the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities for adding his commentary today, too, and the Minister of Labour as well. Thank you very much.

I quite expected the response from the Progressive Conservative side as being standoffish and not willing to look at any opportunities for us to advance the cause of labour reform and the cause of working people in this

province. Again, the intent of this bill is to take a look at where some modest reforms can be made: increases for participation and protection, really.

The member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington superficially mentioned the aspect of off-site voting. In this day and age, I can buy a car with my cell-phone, so technologies exist that protect relevant personal information. We are there today, and we can afford workers the ability to exercise their democratic rights when they want to organize their workplace or participate in an organizing drive without the fear of reprisal, and that's what this is all about. It's not about messing up any type of democratic process of voting or organizing.

What the member suggests is that we continue along a process that is akin to—if you can appreciate, we've all participated in elections. Imagine we had to go to the polls and only Tories were running the polling booth? Who would dare vote against that? You'd be subjected to intimidation.

That's what happens in a lot of workplaces here, and we want to absolutely protect any workers from even being put into that position. This is one way we can do it, but we can certainly talk it through at committee, and I look forward to the support of members from across the way to get it there.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. We'll take the vote at the end of regular business.

ENSURING LOCAL VOICES IN NEW CASINO GAMBLING DEVELOPMENT ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 VISANT À GARANTIR LA CONSULTATION DES POPULATIONS LOCALES AVANT LA CRÉATION DE NOUVEAUX CASINOS

Mr. McNaughton moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 76, An Act to amend the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation Act, 1999 / Projet de loi 76, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1999 sur la Société des loteries et des jeux de l'Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Thank you very much, Speaker. It's an honour to rise in the House today for the second reading of my first private member's bill, Bill 76, Ensuring Local Voices in New Casino Gambling Development Act, 2012.

When I was first elected back on October 6 last year, I was eager to roll up my sleeves and get to work for the people in my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex and for the people of Ontario. I have to say that having been in office for almost eight months, I remain committed to

helping Ontario be the best place to own and operate a business and, more importantly, to call home.

As the Ontario PC critic for economic development and innovation, I've had the pleasure to meet with many individuals, stakeholders and groups who have been voicing their concerns about the direction we are headed here in Ontario. I have received a wealth of information regarding the challenges that Ontario is facing and the issues that are concerning Ontarians. I believe that it is essential that the people of Ontario have a voice in local decision-making, and that is why I am proposing this bill here today.

Speaker, as you know, with recent plans to modernize the OLG, it has been announced that new casino development is among the top considerations currently ongoing. No doubt there is opportunity in new casino development. Jobs, investment and increased tourism are all cited as important benefits that new casinos could bring, and I don't disagree. But new casino development also causes great debate and even concern from segments of our communities. Social and other economic costs, increased pressures on families, addiction issues and strain on our communities have all been cited as potential drawbacks, and there is merit to these concerns as well.

It is for this reason that I have brought forward my bill, Bill 76, here today. My bill will require that a successful municipal referendum be completed prior to any new casino development. I believe that a local referendum is an excellent way to allow the local people and local communities to have a direct voice in large and potentially controversial decisions that might impact their communities.

Speaker, as you know, our party has long advocated for local voices in decisions like these. Personally, I have seen the successes of local referendums first hand in my hometown of Newbury. Prior to serving as a municipal councillor, the villages surrounding Newbury were beginning to amalgamate. The possibility of amalgamation for the people of Newbury was of great concern, and the residents there felt that it would be better for them to remain on their own.

Due to these concerns, there was a local referendum that placed the decision to amalgamate in the hands of the local people. Today, the village of Newbury is thriving and is benefiting from choosing not to amalgamate with the surrounding villages. I served as municipal councillor for three terms, and through this experience, I realized the value and the importance of local voices in decision-making. The people knew what was best for them. They knew what would work and what wouldn't, and today our community of Newbury is benefiting greatly from this local input.

Local decision-making is a fundamental aspect of Canadian politics, and I'm sad to say that it is a value that has slowly faded over the last nine years here in this province. Our province is now at a point where the people of Ontario are being told what to do, a top-down approach that has proven to fail. There is no longer consultation on the part of the government, and, indeed

local voices are often squeezed out. This is something that I am fundamentally against, and that is why I have decided to take action and introduce my private member's bill.

The PC Party understands the importance of ensuring local voices in decision-making. Earlier this session, my fellow caucus member MPP Smith introduced his first private member's bill, Bill 10, the Local Municipality Democracy Act. This act aimed to help restore local decision-making on the issue of wind turbines in local municipalities. Despite strenuous objections from families and local residents, the government continues to plow ahead with industrial wind farms without receiving local approval. MPP Smith's bill aimed to ensure that local families' concerns were no longer ignored.

Mr. Speaker, if the people of Ontario don't want to have something built in their community, they should be allowed to say no, and this bill will help ensure their voices are listened to and respected.

1510

When it comes to new casino development, I strongly believe that the local community must be willing hosts of new casinos, that the local community must want and accept any new casino development before it can occur. This bill would ensure local families' concerns are no longer ignored. Our caucus wants to see action that places decision-making back in the hands of local residents, and we have long advocated that local governments, businesses and families know what's best for their communities. We will continue to fight to ensure that the local residents are given a voice in deciding if their community will host a casino.

The current government wants to expand gambling in Ontario in the hopes that they will increase tax revenues. We can debate about it, but the fact remains that casino gambling is not the best way to grow Ontario's economy. Ontario should be growing its tax revenue from increased jobs and prosperity, not from increased casino gambling. We need to ensure that we are promoting good tax policy for the people of Ontario and for our communities.

The government should be putting their energy into growing our economy through innovation and supporting Ontario's small businesses. The government should be focused on reducing taxes, reducing energy costs and making the changes necessary to create jobs and to help grow and develop our local economy.

Casinos provide important local job opportunities and do lead to countless other spinoffs—they do bring investment dollars—but it is essential that when a casino comes to town, local residents have a say in that decision.

I cannot stress it enough that new casino development comes with real responsibilities and calls for a serious, inclusive planning process. The people must be given a say on issues that significantly impact upon their lives and their communities.

I am proud to introduce my first private member's bill, again, a bill entitled Ensuring Local Voices in New Casino Gambling Development Act, 2012. I'm excited about this bill. I'm proud to stand up to help ensure local

voices in new casino development are heard. I would urge all members of this House to stand with their local communities, their people, and to support my bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: There are occasions from time to time where some New Democrats agree with Tories, only—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Exactly. It's amazing how that works every now and then—

Interjection: God bless. God bless.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: God bless.

And so, on this bill, I am happy to support the member from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, and I agree with much of what he has said.

I'm looking forward to the Minister of the Environment speaking to this bill, because I remember the days when he would be on this side of the House condemning the one-eyed monsters, the slot machines. What did you call them there, Jim?

Hon. James J. Bradley: One-armed bandits.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: One-armed bandits. He used to stand up every day in the House, attacking the one-armed bandits and the effects they had on communities. So I hope they will give you a couple of minutes to speak to this bill, because I want to hear from you.

I love to hear Minister Duncan these days, the Minister of Finance, because he is one of the biggest boosters of casinos I have ever seen—God bless again—and the language he uses; he speaks of this as an unalloyed bonanza in economic, cultural and recreational benefits. He talks about casinos as “an entertainment destination....unparalleled in the country.” This is strong language from the Minister of Finance.

He also argues that this would fix the waterfront. I think he's absolutely wrong. I know my friend the Minister of the Environment—we've been here for a long time together—agrees with me on this, and I'm looking forward to his comments.

I know that David Olive, a good journalist with the Toronto Star, who I admire, says of the minister that he is a prime candidate for Gamblers Anonymous with his \$2-billion addiction. I think he's right on the money on that one. And it could be that it isn't just the Minister of Finance connected to this addiction and the only member of Gamblers Anonymous; I suspect there are a number of Liberals in that caucus who feel the same way. But I also believe that there are many Liberals who disagree, and I'm looking forward to one-minuter kind of responses to say, “We agree with the member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex and his bill.” We'll wait and see.

Now, I know the government has got a financial problem. I know that this minister and this government have been cutting corporate taxes for a long time, just as the Tories did. They cut income taxes—

Hon. James J. Bradley: We stopped them.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No, no, no. You can play that song if you want, but you guys have been cutting

income taxes for a long time, and all of a sudden you need money and what do you do? You introduce a harmonized sales tax and you want now to reform the OLG to go out and get more money from younger people who are not spending. In order to get more than the \$2 billion and get the extra \$1.3 billion, you need more casinos and you need the online kind of gambling. Why? To be able to attract more and more young people to gamble—the very ones who are graduating with good degrees and got no money, or the ones who don't graduate and got no jobs. What do they have? More opportunities from the Minister of Finance to be able to go and gamble the few dollars that they possibly might have saved here or there, have they the ability to save.

The casinos produce little wealth; in that regard, I agree with the member. They produce more gambling and they spur gambling addiction, and we know that 30% of gambling revenues come from problem gamblers—30%.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Minister of the Environment, please come to order.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Marcus Gee makes reference to what the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health says: “4.8% of Ontario adults, or 449,000 people, have moderate or severe gambling problems.” This is a huge number; we're talking half a million. “Another 860,000 people are considered ‘at risk’ for problem gambling.” These are serious, serious numbers.

I understand the minister and his desire to be able to raise more money. We believe that this is not the way to do it, and on this I agree with the member from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex.

Richard Florida, someone who the Liberals respect a lot—and I do, too—says legalized gambling's costs in crime, bankruptcies, lost productivity and diminished social capital exceed supposed gains from added jobs, the very few that they produce, and revenues by a ratio of three to one, according to the person who has done the research, whose name is Grinols, on this subject. The benefits of the few jobs that are produced are outweighed by the social costs, which are two to eight times higher. That's what the research says. I don't know what the Minister of Finance is looking at by his research, but everything that we have looked at speaks against any comments made by the Minister of Finance on this subject.

The Toronto waterfront is a shared asset. We're talking about green space and public space that belongs to people, families and children. When you have green space, we believe it makes people more satisfied and happy to be part of a community. David Olive again—the same journalist—says, “A casino is among the least promising means of spearheading a waterfront revival.”

I'm looking forward to see which Liberal will speak on this bill.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: They won't let you either? Well, let's just see who's going to speak. I don't know.

They won't let you either. God bless. There has got to be someone. We'll see who comes along.

But I have to say, a previous bill on this matter allowed referendums up until 2003, and that was sunsetted. We no longer have the ability to give communities a say in this regard.

1520

And I've got to tell you, I'm not a fan of referendums in general. I've never been a fan because powerful interests can skew the results in ways that, as a New Democrat, frighten me. But on this one, I believe that the public is smarter than the few wealthy people who the Minister of Finance is associated with, and I believe that the majority of people will make the right decision on this one.

Minister of post-secondary, do you agree with that? Nod your head yes or no.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask the member to confine his remarks to the bill.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I believe that a referendum has to happen before a casino is adopted in any city, wherever in the province of Ontario. This is the way it should go. In this regard, this member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex has done a good thing.

We agree with the Tories on this one, because I suspect most of the Tories are onside on this. I suspect we're going to have a couple of ministers standing up in agreement, or at least sitting down in agreement. Either way—standing up in agreement or sitting down in agreement—it's all fine by me.

I'll leave time for my colleague here to say a few words in this regard.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I'm certainly pleased to rise and discuss Bill 76, the first private member's bill brought by our colleague from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. It certainly is an opportunity to review the work of the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation Act and consider the many ways that we can ensure that any future gaming sites are situated in municipalities that are, in fact, willing hosts.

First of all, I'd like to start by reviewing some facts related to OLG. It does generate some \$3.7 billion in economic activity in Ontario, and it does provide some \$2 billion in revenue to Ontario. That's revenue that goes to schools and health care, as well as providing jobs to some 18,000 employees across the province. Locally, this revenue provides some \$1.9 million for sponsorship of community festivals and events, and some \$7.1 million goes to participating local charities. So there are clearly some benefits that municipalities will want to consider as they think about the option of becoming a gaming site.

The Ontario government has recently received a report from the OLG that proposes modernization of the gaming system in Ontario. These initiatives will increase revenues by more than \$1.3 billion a year by 2017-18 and will create 2,300 net new jobs in the gaming industry and

nearly 4,000 additional jobs in the hospitality and retail sectors.

The government will also enhance its problem gambling strategy, which is delivered by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, to determine where funding and programs can be enhanced. Ontario already spends nearly \$40 million annually on problem gambling treatment, prevention and research, more than any other jurisdiction in North America. The government is committed to the renewal and growth of Ontario's problem gambling strategy.

This is particularly important to me as a former medical officer of health. While most people can enjoy gambling as a harmless pastime, a small proportion do become addicted. However, most people in our society believe that we should have the right to choose whether we are going to indulge in gambling or not.

Lest we forget, casino gambling was brought in by the NDP and was expanded dramatically under the previous Conservative government.

What do the changes at OLG actually mean? With Internet-based gaming growing, a higher Canadian dollar and US border communities building their own gaming sites, our gaming system has to change. We need to reform and modernize gaming in Ontario by allowing safe, responsible access to gaming opportunities. To ensure Ontario taxpayers receive the greatest value for their tax dollars, the government has directed OLG to reconfigure the number of gaming sites and tailor the types of gaming activities made available at each site; launch multi-lane sales of lottery tickets at major retail outlets, including grocery stores; increase operational efficiencies by expanding the role of the private sector; implement a new fee model for municipalities hosting gaming sites; and allow one new casino in the GTA, subject to an OLG business case and, most importantly, municipal approval.

Again, the revenues will be used to fund vital public services like health care and education that Ontarians count on.

I would now like to turn to the issue of requiring referendums, as Bill 76 does. This requirement, apparently, is to inform municipal and First Nation decision-making related to the establishment of a casino. First of all, where a municipality or a First Nations reserve may wish to conduct a referendum, they already have the power to do so. A referendum is certainly one way to canvass public opinion, and its use in Canada has been increasing. But municipal councils should have the power to retain control of making that decision. Municipalities are a mature level of government. Our friend opposite was a councillor; municipal councillors are elected to make decisions on behalf of the electorate. They have a number of ways in which to consult their electorate apart from referendums, such as town hall meetings, deputations to council, and meeting with their constituents.

In terms of referendums themselves, first of all there is a cost issue, not only of conducting the poll itself—and I'm surprised that a Conservative member would want to

impose increased spending on a municipality—but also the need to provide information on the question. Since the question often involves a highly emotional issue, both proponents will also want to disseminate their point of view through advertisements and other media. This will involve costs to both sides on the question as well as to the municipality that will be required to conduct a public education campaign. If that campaign is not properly resourced or is seen to be biased, the referendum campaign is unlikely to have a positive effect on political engagement and may even increase disillusionment with the political process. Expenditure ceilings will have to be established and need to be set at a level to ensure that referendums cannot be bought, as has been alluded to, by the richer side. All these complications may undermine public confidence in the result.

For all these reasons, I therefore believe it is most appropriate to leave this decision in the hands of local councillors and thus maintain the status quo.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I am very pleased to rise to speak to Bill 76. I would like to start by thanking my friend and colleague the member from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex for bringing forward this important bill as his first private member's bill in this Legislature.

As my colleague has pointed out, the Ensuring Local Voices in New Casino Gambling Development Act would make it mandatory to hold a municipal referendum before a new casino development could go forward.

Our party has always been committed to working with local communities and with local municipal governments to reach decisions that are not only good for our province but are also good for our local communities. Perhaps more importantly, however, ensuring that local decision-making powers stay with local communities is a cornerstone of the democratic process.

Unfortunately, the Liberal government clearly doesn't believe that communities should have the right to decide what happens in their backyard and that the McGuinty Liberals know best. This was certainly made clear, Mr. Speaker, when the Liberals passed the Green Energy Act and withdrew local decision-making powers specifically from our rural communities and from others. Since then, the Progressive Conservative caucus has tabled numerous pieces of legislation to restore these powers but has been consistently shut down by the Liberals.

It's important that the Liberals begin to support our local communities and ensure that they will have a say in what their environment looks like. Supporting this bill, I would suggest, would be a very good place to start.

Clearly, some communities will welcome the building of a gambling facility, and others will not. But this piece of legislation will ensure that new casinos will be built in communities that will welcome the business, embrace the industry and ensure it becomes a valuable part of the community. For all of these reasons, this bill is welcome and vital to the development of a healthy and democratic province and of healthy communities as well. That's why

I'm pleased to voice my support for this bill and again to thank the member from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex for bringing it forward.

1530

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a pleasure to rise also in support of this bill. I'm going to be very specific about my comments because—guess what?—both the riding of the member from Trinity—Spadina and my riding of Parkdale—High Park actually almost abut—his does directly; mine, almost—to Ontario Place, and what I'm concerned about is Ontario Place. We have petition after petition that's going out. We had a rally here at Queen's Park. I can tell you that in my riding, nobody wants a casino at Ontario Place. Not one person wants a casino there, for a variety of reasons.

First of all, we want a family-friendly access place to the lake. It's our lake. It doesn't belong to a casino; it doesn't belong to private interests. It belongs to the people who live there and their children. We hope that this government—I know they're going down the slippery slope with online gambling. That is truly the crack cocaine of gambling addiction. But this is yet another assault on young people, on children, because this is their lake and this is a place that they should have access to with their families.

I also must point out that it's probably only about a mile from the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health—literally under a mile, just up on Queen Street. This is an incredibly addictive practice, and you know that in Parkdale there are many, many homes and many, many individuals who suffer from addiction issues. It was so, so sad to see the member from Oak Ridges—Markham, a doctor, get up—and she knows about addiction; she knows the incredible toll addictions take on families—and stand up, basically in favour of gambling. What? What is this place coming to? This is sad.

Here is the lake. Often in the west end of Toronto, we really look with longing at what they have in the east end of Toronto, which is access points to the lake, the lake being public. We don't have that. We have lanes of highways between us. Here's an opportunity to redress that problem. Here's an opportunity to actually have something that works for everyone.

I might point out, Mr. Speaker, that a referendum is something supported by the majority of Toronto councillors and Toronto council itself. In fact, it was on the books here, and sneakily, this government just brought in this initiative after they realized that that particular statute had been sunsetted.

So I applaud the member. I don't have a problem supporting Tories when they do the right thing; we just wish they'd do the right thing more often, that's all. We support Liberals when they do the right thing; we just wish they'd do the right thing more often. We certainly appeal to all sides of the House. Here's the right thing to do. Vote for the will of the people, is what we're saying, and the will of families and the best interests of our children. That's it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to be able to rise and comment on Bill 76 and the scheme that is laid out here for municipal referendums. But first I would like to back up a little bit and talk about the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp.

As the member from Oak Ridges–Markham has noted, Ontario gets about \$2 billion annually in net revenue from OLG. What's interesting about that revenue is two things. One is that the net revenue that comes to the province goes to support health care and education and, in fact, the Ontario Trillium Foundation, which means that we get things done that we need to get done in our communities. The second thing that's interesting about that net revenue is that Ontario gets less money per dollar wagered than any other province in Canada. So the wagering is going on, but we, the taxpayers of Ontario, people who use the education system, who use the health care system, get less money from that wagering than in any other province in Canada.

So what has happened is that the government has asked OLG to look at ways in which we can increase the amount of revenue, the share of the revenue—both of those—that we are receiving. A number of the members have mentioned Internet gambling. The thing about Internet gambling is, it's already happening, and that's the gambling of choice of young people. It's already happening. Money is pouring out of the province.

We've said to OLG, let's look at a way to set up some safe Internet gambling sites in Ontario, where we can actually cap the amount of money that young people are spending, as opposed to getting themselves in over their heads. But we've also said that we need to have a look at where the slots are, where the casinos are. Should we reconfigure/relocate them?

It's important to note, according to this scheme with OLG, that the location of a casino anywhere in Ontario is subject to there being a business case and municipal approval. Similarly, the decision to relocate a slot casino or slots is also dependent on the municipal approval of the host.

Now, what Bill 76 would do—and it's a very oddly drafted bill, I must say, because although in the explanatory note it says it's about referendums on casinos, in fact, the word “referendum” is never actually mentioned in the bill. Nevertheless, I'll take it from the explanatory note that that's what it's about because it says that's what it's about.

If you're a municipality in Ontario, you already have the right for the council to decide to have a referendum. I think of my home constituency of Guelph, where there was a decades-long debate that went on about, should we have elections at large for city council? Should we have a ward system for city council? It was a very fractious, emotional debate. Finally, council said, “You know what? We'll just have a binding referendum and we'll let the taxpayers solve it.” Well, we now have a ward system, and once there was a ward system for the municip-

pal council, the school council could also move to a ward system, which I must say made campaigning a whole lot easier if, as one person, you didn't have to walk the whole city of Guelph. But I digress.

But the point is, I think that a lot of the people around here can think of instances in which their municipality chose to hold a referendum, or maybe a neighbouring municipality. The right to choose to have a municipal referendum already exists.

What this bill does is take away the right of the council to decide how it's going to make up its own mind. Does it want to have a town hall? Does it want to accept delegations at council? Does it want to have a referendum? That's a council decision. As the member for Parkdale–High Park noted, here in Toronto it appears that the city council might choose to have a referendum on the subject of casinos. That's fine. That's what the law already says.

But why would we want to force the municipality? Why would we want to tell a municipality how it has to go about making up its own mind. People elected their councillors. The councillors should be able to decide how they go about having these decisions.

I find this very rich, that the people who forced amalgamation of school boards, who forced amalgamations of municipalities, without asking the municipalities or the school boards, now say that, for a zoning decision, you have to have a referendum.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Can I ask members to quiet down a little? It's very noisy in here.

The member for Newmarket–Aurora.

Mr. Frank Klees: Thank you, Speaker, I'm pleased to rise to speak to the bill presented by my colleague the member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex. I particularly like the title of this bill—and when you see the title, you also get to know the member himself—Ensuring Local Voices in New Casino Gambling Development Act. The member is all about supporting his constituents and being a voice here for them, not the other way around.

1540

Speaker, I only have a couple of minutes to speak, but I have to address the issue that the member from Guelph raised here about the fact that, “Well, we have to leave this to the municipal councils to determine.” I will agree with the member on this point if, in fact, that municipal council ran on a platform of bringing in casinos. Then, her argument stands. But if this very important issue has not gone to the people and those councillors did not make it clear, as they were looking for the votes from their community, that they would support the establishment of a casino or expanding gambling, then I say to the member from Guelph, she couldn't be more wrong. It is absolutely contrary to the political process and the democratic process. We, here, should be representing our constituents. Municipal councillors should be representing their constituents.

The establishment of a casino is not a simple decision. It's not a matter of building a road or a bridge. This is

something that affects the quality of life in every community.

Let's talk about Ontario Place, the place that was established where people from all across Ontario could come together and celebrate Ontario, celebrate its heritage. To even suggest that on that pristine piece of property there would be a high-rise glitzy casino that would attract people from all across Ontario and the United States and they'd come here for the purpose of gambling, I say is robbing the people of Ontario of one of the jewels.

I trust that the government and the Minister of Finance would listen to the Minister of the Environment, because we know that he stands with us on this issue, as I know many other Liberal backbenchers do.

The Minister of the Environment may be the only cabinet minister there, but we are going to encourage him to take a stand amongst his cabinet colleagues for what is right.

Interjection: Like you did with Mike Harris.

Mr. Frank Klees: Yes, that's right; I did with Mike Harris. As a matter of fact, Speaker, I take great pride that in that government, we insisted that a fund be set up to address problem gaming. One of the questions I'm going to ask the Minister of the Environment is whether or not that fund is actually being used the way it was intended to be used.

Speaker, I'm going to defer to my colleagues. I want to thank my colleague once again for bringing this issue forward. It is all about ensuring that the people in our communities are properly represented, that we take their quality of life into consideration when these important decisions are made. That's what this bill does. Anyone who would vote against this is really voting against the local decision-making that we get elected to protect.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm proud to rise in support of the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex's Bill 76. I think it's important to understand what the member is trying to do with this legislation. He's simply trying to enshrine in legislation, in the OLG act, a principle that I think the majority of Ontarians support, and that is that if a facility is going to be proposed for a municipality, that local residents have that forum to make sure that that community is a willing partner.

As I said, this is nothing new. In fact, it has been in practice for some time. I think it speaks to democracy being served, by allowing municipalities to have that say. Certainly, when it comes to the members opposite, I think, as well, Bill 76 provides us a bit of an insurance policy against the members opposite.

A referendum is nothing new. Back in November 2000, four communities in Leeds-Grenville were short-listed for an OLG casino. They all held referendums. Brockville was the nearest of margins, 52%; Leeds and the Thousand Islands township was 59%; Gananoque was 62%; and the town of Prescott was 72%.

Ultimately, the OLG Thousand Islands casino was opened in 2002 and it's shared between Leeds and the Thousand Islands in Gananoque.

I think the point is that when our party was in power, they allowed that opportunity for a referendum to be held by the municipality, because you know what, Speaker? It's all about respect for our municipal partners. I understand, and I think we all understand, that those local residents—whether it be in a debate, but certainly with the vote, it gives communities that sense of whether a gaming facility is really a fit for them, and I want to compliment the member for tabling Bill 76. Frankly, Speaker, I think, from all of our perspectives on this side, it's an issue of respect.

So I want to just briefly talk about the situation, really the short-sighted attack that the McGuinty government has on the horse racing industry. They've done so by unilaterally tearing up an agreement in closing the slots facilities at racetracks across the province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask the member to restrict your comments to the bill in front of us.

Mr. Steve Clark: But Speaker, it was with no consultation, it was with no discussion. There was no local discussion—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask you to confine your comments to the bill and not argue with the Speaker.

Mr. Steve Clark: I want to quote Mark Steacy, Canadian horseman of the year, a trainer in the village of Lansdowne who employs 12 people—this is what he recently wrote—

Interjection: You're ignoring the Speaker.

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm not.

He's making a very good point that in terms of casinos, "It appears that the Liberals have a plan to oversaturate our province with casinos by building more and finding other 'in-your-face' venues for slot machines. In my mind, this is ludicrous given that the current system has a reasonable balance between job creation, profit and gambling addictions.

"I feel that all forms of gambling including betting on horses should be done where a dollar lost is a dollar worth of entertainment for the customer, similar to a night out at the movie theatre.

"A casino is a voluntary tax and in some cases it plays on people's addictions. It is not meant for people to win, or it wouldn't be there. Although they are great places to visit, do we want an Ontario like a Las Vegas or an economically depressed Atlantic City, where the social costs outweigh the initial profits?"

His final quote: "Do we want our children to be exposed daily to slot machines at our local restaurants or Walmarts? My thoughts are absolutely not." I want to thank Mr. Steacy for providing those comments.

Just in closing, because I know the member for Durham wants a minute, I have to commend democracy by Bill 76 and the member opposite. I know in my heart

that this bill should pass today and we should move forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you to the member, as well. I have the greatest respect for the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, but in fairness, in my riding of Durham there's a very unique casino—and I've written to the Minister of Finance and I've spoken to the Minister of Finance. It's the Great Blue Heron Charity Casino, which is a First Nations casino. I can tell you this: They are the greatest supporters of Durham and that immediate area for needy and important groups.

But the issue here is about local democracy. The way he spoke about it—and as the member from Newmarket–Aurora mentioned, support municipalities in this. I'd urge the government members to stop for a moment. Their plan for Ontario, their job and economy plan, is more casinos; what a terrible vision for the province of Ontario. We need more hope and opportunity for our young people. We need to allow municipalities to grow. They've put their fingers around their neck on the Green Energy Act and they've done it on the casino thing and the horse racing business. I can only say that the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex speaks for many on Tim Hudak's team. Give municipalities the freedom to do the job, and don't be so hard on people that need the opportunity.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Thank you very much, Speaker, and I want to thank my fellow colleagues for their comments and feedback. I also want to thank the parties opposite for their ideas and input in relation to the piece of legislation that I'm proposing with Bill 76.

Specifically, thank you to the MPPs from Leeds–Grenville, Whitby–Oshawa, Newmarket–Aurora, Durham, Trinity–Spadina, Oak Ridges–Markham, Parkdale–High Park, Guelph, and all others. Also, thanks to the member from St. Catharines for all of his input to the debate today.

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I believe that it's important to listen to the voices in this Legislature, to respect all members of this House and to give careful thought and due consideration to what everyone in this House has to say.

Speaker, I believe it is even more important to listen to the people, to listen to the local voices and hear what they have to say. I believe that Ontario can recover from the current challenges this province is facing. I believe that Ontario can lead again, but in order to do that, I believe it is essential to include the people of Ontario in the decision-making process. Men and women throughout Ontario know what's best for their own communities. They know if a casino will help them or hurt them. They know if it will contribute to their community or take away from it, and they know if they want such a development or not.

Bill 76 will guarantee that local people have a say. We believe that, collectively, local communities and residents are best suited to make important decisions on issues like these. It has long been our party's position to ensure local decision-making before any new casino is built.

I would encourage all my honourable colleagues in this House to join with me today in support of this bill on second reading, and I look forward to discussing this bill further at the committee stage.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. We'll take the vote at the end of regular business.

ELEPHANT PROTECTION ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LA PROTECTION DES ÉLÉPHANTS

Mr. Berardinetti moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 69, An Act to amend the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act to protect elephants / Projet de loi 69, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Société de protection des animaux de l'Ontario afin de protéger les éléphants.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I want to start off by saying that on April 18, 2012, I introduced Bill 69 to amend the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, otherwise known as the OSPCA Act. Bill 69 is designed to provide greater protection for elephants in the province of Ontario. These amendments will prohibit the use of abusive weapons such as bull hooks against elephants and will restrict the amount of time elephants can be chained without the ability to move around freely. These amendments are necessary for both elephant welfare as well as public safety.

The preamble to this bill addresses the purpose of Bill 69 in detail. I would like to focus on several key aspects of Bill 69.

The bull hook is a tool of discipline used in elephant management programs and circuses. The bull hook, or ankus, is a sharp, pointed hook used for prodding and to discourage undesirable behaviour. The bull hook is embedded into the most sensitive areas of an elephant: around the feet, behind the ears, under the chin, inside the mouth and other sensitive areas around the face. Other similar devices are used to electric shock elephants.

The use of these implements is to dominate through fear and violence. Fear-based training methods are never in the best interests of the animal. Often, the animal suffers from permanent scarring, lifelong injuries and, ultimately, death.

Serious threats to public safety are inherent, due to the cruel and abusive training methods involved with performing captive animals. Elephants are known to escape their chains and, because of that type of abusive fear

training, they will rampage, causing incredible damage, injury and death.

There are some who would argue, "Why are we considering this bill on elephant welfare right now?" I'm happy to address this issue. This is an issue of concern, and it focuses on highly intelligent animals across the province. This widespread interest in elephant welfare is evidenced by all the media coverage of elephants in Ontario in the past week alone. More than 100 articles about elephants have been printed in Canadian newspapers, and this week, elephant stories have been on the front pages of both the *Toronto Star* and the *Globe and Mail*.

As members of this Parliament, it is easy for us to lose sight of the fact that people across Ontario have concerns in a wide area of issues. In this Legislature, we debate important issues such as the economy, health care and education. All, of course, are critical for our province and our constituents.

I want to be clear that this bill is focused on elephants. This bill will not impact other animals, and there will be no implications to the agriculture industry from the bill. It is important to note that the courts have divided animals into two classifications: those that are used domestically, such as farm animals and companion animals; and secondly, those that are wild by nature, including elephants.

A column that appeared in yesterday's *Toronto Star*, by Thomas Walkorn, contained the following comments: "The battle is over the relationship between humans and animals—or, to be more precise, between humans and other animals.

"At issue is a fundamental question: Do animals exist merely to accommodate human beings, or do they have a purpose of their own? ...

"Those surprised at the bitterness of this battle should harken back four years to the debate in Parliament over strengthening animal cruelty laws.

"That issue, too, initially seemed one of motherhood. Who could object to efforts designed to protect animals from being abused?

"But it turned out that many did object—from the hunting and fishing lobby ... to the research lobby to the agri-business lobby, to the aboriginal lobby....

"They successfully derailed the bill.

"Nor is the battle confined to Toronto and Ottawa. The Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals ran into a buzz-saw in late February after inspectors raided 16 farms northwest of London.

"Many farmers view OSPCA inspectors as meddling do-gooders. In this case, members of the radical-right Ontario Landowners' Association rallied to protest the raids....

"And the OSPCA? Except for reporting the barest details, it kept a low profile. History suggests that when the debate over animals is addressed head on, those who believe such creatures exist solely for the pleasure and profit of humans generally win."

That article basically expands on a very important point that I want to make. Elephants are highly intelligent

wild animals, and because of this and their sheer size and stature, they are considered to be dangerous and have been responsible for injuries and deaths of many people when these animals are pushed to their limits through abuse or constant confinement.

When elephants are required to perform in animal shows and performances, including circus shows, some elephant handlers still employ abusive and outdated disciplinary tools. The elephant managers who try to justify the use of bull hooks by claiming they are used just as a guide similar to a dog leash, however, are not in line with what the truth really is. For example, a dog is not fearful of the leash; in fact, most dogs wag their tails when they see it. On the other hand, the bull hook, designed to cause the animal pain and invoke fear, is something that elephants don't like.

An appropriate analogy would be holding a gun to someone's head. It does not matter if the weapon is loaded; the threat of injury or death is enough to scare someone into submission. The same is true of the bull hook. This is why the beatings go on behind closed doors away from public view or from any government agency's view. But the animals, in this case elephants, do not forget what may happen to them if they do not perform.

Modern, progressive zoos and sanctuaries around the world have stopped using fear or dominance-based training of elephants in favour of safer, more humane systems such as protected contact management systems. This system is used in the *Toronto Zoo*. I'm going to repeat: It's the protected contact management system. This system rewards elephants for good behaviour rather than disciplining them for unwanted behaviours. The elephants are not restrained for substantial periods of time and only restrained using specially designed barriers.

According to Dr. Jane Goodall, elephants are unique in the animal kingdom and are a species of animal that is not suitable for captivity. World-renowned elephant scientists such as Dr. Cynthia Moss, Dr. Joyce Poole, Dr. Keith Lindsay and many others who have spent their entire careers studying elephant behaviour agree that elephants are highly intelligent social animals with family structures similar to humans, and should never be trained using weapons such as bull hooks and should not be chained or otherwise confined in very small spaces for a long period of time. These practices cause them physical and physiological harm that not only injures the animal but creates a very dangerous situation.

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Additionally, Dr. Bradshaw has studied psychological issues for elephants, and because of her work we now know that elephants are self-aware and can suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder when they're attacked or under constant threat. One of my colleagues will be discussing this issue in more detail.

The question in front of us today is: Why is this law necessary, given that the OSPCA Act covers all species of animals? The answer is simple. The OSPCA Act only deals with animal suffering in a retroactive fashion,

punishing harmful behaviour only after it has occurred and only if it's seen by a member of the public or an enforcement officer, but does not prevent suffering occurring in the first place. In the case of elephant abuse, the abusers are very careful to do the beating when there are no enforcement people present and are careful to hide the weapons they use on elephants from the public at large.

I want to read part of a transcript from a former elephant trainer working in the United States who quit his job and stated: "Whenever the" United States Department of Agriculture "inspected the circus, the circus always knew in advance that they were coming. We were always told to clean up; don't hit the elephants when they come around. I know for a fact that any attempt by the USDA to regulate the circus or to enforce laws is a joke. I was present at many inspections where the inspectors" were told not to handle the elephants in any kind of bad fashion and to hide the bull hooks. "Obviously, they would not be able to regulate a situation that they see only two or three times a year."

Circuses easily get away with routine abuse because no government agency monitors the training sessions, which are separate from the actual performances. Undercover video footage of animal training sessions has shown that elephants are beaten with bull hooks and shocked with electric prods, and some circus trainers have even been documented using blowtorches towards elephants. Because these practices are so abusive, they're never done in the presence of the public, or when an inspection agency is doing inspections at the circus. These abusive beatings are "necessary" in order for the elephants to be in constant fear of pain and reprisal whenever they see a handler using a bull hook.

Frustrated by years of beatings, bull hooks and shackles, some elephants snap. When an elephant rebels against a trainer's physical dominance, trainers cannot protect themselves, let alone the public.

In 1994, an elephant named Tyke killed her trainer and injured 12 spectators before being gunned down while running terrified through downtown Honolulu. She was shot almost 100 times.

In 1992, Officer Blaine Doyle was forced to shoot and kill Janet, an elephant who charged out of the Great American Circus arena with five children on her back.

In more than 35 dangerous incidents since 2000, elephants have bolted from circuses, run amok through streets, crashed into buildings, attacked members of the public and killed and injured their own handlers.

The argument is that it has not happened here yet, but the Florida Legislature could have done the same thing today before Janet rampaged, or any other jurisdiction had it happened there. We could remind them that Tyke was in Canada just weeks before rampaging in Hawaii; it could have happened here. Also, there was an elephant handler killed in Timmins by a circus elephant in 1999. An elephant keeper at the Toronto Zoo was gored by an elephant in 1993 before they moved to more humane and safe training and handling at that zoo.

Recently, the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, the largest zoo association in North America, put out a new policy on elephant management which restricts the use of bull hooks, also known as free contact, citing this form of elephant handling as a risk to occupational health and safety after a number of elephant handlers have been killed.

For the reasons listed above, Mr. Speaker, I feel that the amendment I am proposing will be widely supported by residents of Ontario, and I urge all members to support this important elephant protection initiative. Thank you.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I'll ask all the members to my left—this is the second warning. There's a lot of conversation going on, the place is very noisy and I can't hear the speaker.

Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's my job to join the debate today on Bill 69, the Elephant Protection Act, re the OSPCA Act. I have to ask myself, I have to ask this Legislature and I have to ask the member from—is it Scarborough Southwest?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Yes.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Scarborough Southwest; I didn't have time to look it up.

There must be a more pressing issue in your municipality or in your constituency than this act that you're bringing forth today. However, this is your right as a private member, so we will respond to it.

I do ask why would we—what is the necessity to bring this special protection into the OSPCA Act with regards to the treatment of elephants? In fact, when the act was reformed not that long ago, the minister—Minister Bartolucci at the time—said, "The Provincial Animal Welfare Act includes new animal protection and investigation powers. For example, the OSPCA inspectors now have the authority to enter zoos, circuses, petting farms and any other property where animals are kept for exhibition, entertainment, boarding, hire or sale."

And the definition in the act of "distress," which is already in the act: "'distress' means the state of being in need of proper care, water, food or shelter or being injured, sick or in pain or suffering or being abused or subject to undue or unnecessary hardship, privation or neglect." It covers all of the possible wrongs that an elephant may be forced to endure.

So I ask myself why the member is making this specific thing. This act would only allow the restraint or tethering of an elephant if they were being loaded for transportation or for medical treatment. That's why I can see the bill—and it's in here somewhere. It would essentially prohibit any circus from having elephants for entertainment or whatever purposes.

Barnum and Bailey—you know, the Greatest Show on Earth, as they say—has many, many elephants. In fact, it is world-renowned for its Center for Elephant Conservation, which is an institution in Florida. In fact, it's a place where elephants are trained, but they are also taken there

when they are retired from the show, and they are treated in such a fashion that none other than Jack Hanna, the director emeritus of the Columbus Zoo—you might remember years ago when Jack Hanna was a pretty familiar and regular guest on the Johnny Carson show and a world-renowned animal expert.

I'll tell you what he had to say about it. He said, "A concerted effort to save the Asian elephant is imperative. Zoos are doing their best with the resources they have, but most can't afford to maintain a large breeding group of elephants. The Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey Centre for Elephant Conservation is dedicated to saving the Asian elephant and has both the resources and the commitment to succeed." That's from none other than Jack Hanna.

So what I would say to the member from Scarborough is that perhaps he should be asking himself what his government is doing. This is how well Barnum and Bailey treats their retired elephants. Maybe he should be asking his government how well we're treating our seniors in this province in their retirement years. Perhaps he could come up with a private member's bill that would help with the treatment of them.

The other issue I would like to say to him with respect to—you know, I saw some of that press conference today and it was a little disturbing to watch some of the videos, but I don't believe any of those videos were from Canada. I don't believe any of those videos were from Canada, or Ontario. In fact, one of the stampedes, I believe, was from the Philippines. So if you're going to try to make your case, you should at least do it in a straight-up way and not try and bring the worst of the worst from all across the world to try to imply that this is something that we need to be dealing with in Ontario today. We've got some serious problems in this province.

Every one of us here who has ever had the opportunity to view elephants, either in captivity or for those who are fortunate and blessed enough to have ever viewed them in the wild—me not being one of them. But we're all aware of the importance of elephants.

There's no argument about one thing: All of the studies that have been done—elephants are one of the most intelligent and sensitive creatures on the face of the earth. They may be the largest land animal, but they're also one of the most intelligent and sensitive. We have to do everything we can to protect elephants, as we protect all wildlife that is not in a position to defend or protect themselves.

But I will say that there must be some more important piece of legislation that the member could have brought out today than this bill to protect elephants. This province is in trouble. I have no objection to this bill because I don't believe that it will be supported by the government through third reading, because it's unnecessary. The regulations are already in place in the OSPCA Act to protect elephants and all animals that are part of any kind of entertainment act or circus.

We are here to protect all animals—elephants not being excepted, but not being exceptional either. All animals need to enjoy the same protection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Of course it's a privilege, always, to speak in this House. I listened to the comments from the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, and he was absolutely right that the OSPCA Act does in fact cover the abuse of exotics. There's no question in considering elephants an exotic; they aren't in most of the world, but they are here.

The member was pointing to particular practices. To give him the benefit of the doubt, he was pointing to particular practices where elephants are concerned, that are not practised on other animals. I understand the motivation. I understand that he's bringing this bill forward from the goodness of his heart for creatures that he feels are being maltreated.

That being said, I have to look at the broader context within which this bill has been brought forward. I'm going to limit it to animals. There's no question, we could go on for days if we wanted to talk about humans, as well.

But just for animals, we were privy to a horror in BC, when 100 sled dogs were killed because they were no longer useful. Yet we live in a province where, by the most conservative estimates, we have euthanized, since 2005, over 1,000 dogs just because of the way they look. These were family pets, some of them taken out of people's backyards when they weren't home and didn't know and had to find out where they were—because that's part of the mandate for the OSPCA.

Currently, as we all know, there is a committee looking at Bill 16, which is a bill to overturn the so-called pit bull ban, even though, by the way, there's no such thing as pit bulls—I can't say that often enough. There are only—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Can I ask the member to confine her comments to the bill in front of us?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm taking the scenic route, Mr. Speaker, but I'm getting there. Again, these are animals, like the elephants that he feels such a great deal of compassion for—these are animals that are a little closer to home; i.e., in our homes. They're family pets we're speaking about here. Only 114 of them are covered by that statute. The rest that have been euthanized aren't anything related to pit bulls. They're simply animals that look a certain way. He's concerned about animals that look a certain way; they're elephants. But I wonder why this government isn't concerned about all animals, not just elephants. We're talking about animals here. So there's a particular instance.

I'll give you another instance where his concern for elephants might actually be redirected to animals that this government seems to have no concern for, and that is, for example, under the OSPCA there were something like 100 dogs killed because they had ringworm, when we know it's a very curable illness. All the veterinarians, who, by the way, all testified before the Bill 16 issue—not one has testified against Bill 16. Everyone who has

come has testified for it—overturning the pit bull madness. We had the member from Newmarket–Aurora, who brought forward a motion to have government oversight over OSPCA. There you have a direct bill dealing with OSPCA. Clearly, they were out of control on this one particular issue, and out of that came something called the LeSage report, which called for a task force—a task force—to look at the way OSPCA was handling things, among others, and look at the welfare of animals. I would issue a challenge to this government: Where is that task force? You know, they said, “We’re dealing with it. We’re going to strike a task force.” Where is the task force? Where is the work? As far as we on this side of the House are concerned, the same kind of lack of training and the same kind of ridiculous, reactive behaviour on—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask the member once more to speak to the bill.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Yes, I’m coming back. It’s an OSPCA bill; it opens up the OSPCA.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I’m sorry. The member has a bill in front of us that is specific.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Yes, that is specific to opening up the OSPCA Act, and I’m talking about the OSPCA Act that he wants to open up, all things considered.

To get back to elephants, I have no doubt that there are elephants being abused. My friend from Timiskaming–Cochrane is also going to take some time. He’s going to speak about the agricultural component, because I think he was a little bit dismissive about that as well. The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane is going to deal with that aspect of this bill as well.

To get back to elephants, I have no doubt there are some elephants being abused; I have no doubt that the techniques he’s talking about are abusive. But one has to question this focus. We’ve asked for oversight of the OSPCA in terms of their practices for all animals, and this government has refused to do it, and they refused to strike a task force to even look at doing it.

First, we would like to say, draw the lens back, do first things first. Look at the OSPCA, which is dealing, of course, with the OSPCA Act. Let’s look at what they’re doing generally with all animals, and of course with elephants as well—with elephants as well as all other animals. The single focus on one particular animal, while laudable, gives cold comfort to those dog owners who have seen their dogs taken away and euthanized. It even gives cold comfort to his own member from Willowdale, who I remember introduced an exotic zoo animals act. What ever happened to that? That kind of died; that died on the order paper.

So there’s a big picture here. He’s pointing at a small part of it. Kudos for pointing out a small part of it, but really what’s important here is to look at the big picture: to look at the OSPCA Act, to open it up and change many aspects of the OSPCA Act; in particular, to have government oversight over this agency, which has occasionally acted in a peculiarly rogue fashion, I might say.

I look forward to the comments of the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane, and I say from the bottom of my heart: Do I love elephants? I love elephants, Mr. Speaker. Do I wish that all elephants could be treated well? Absolutely, and I think all New Democrats would say we love elephants and we wish all elephants could be treated well. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Grant Crack: I’d like to thank my colleague from Scarborough Southwest for bringing this important animal rights issue to the forefront. I’d also like to thank the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and the member from Parkdale–High Park for their comments.

Like many of my colleagues in this House, I’m an animal lover. Throughout my life I have been blessed by having pets at home, primarily dogs. Presently, I enjoy the company of a two-year-old Great Dane and also a nine-year-old pug. Both are females. They’re both beautiful dogs, and of course there’s quite a size difference between these two wonderful pets. But surprisingly it’s the pug that is the dominant one. So you have the small dog dominating the bigger one. I can also tell you that they’re very cuddly and there’s not too much room in bed at night.

I mention the size difference of the pets because it reflects the aspect of Bill 69, which my colleague brings forward, where a larger being is dominated by a smaller being. For a century, elephants have been used for human entertainment. They’ve been taken from their natural habitats in various regions of the world and brought and used as spectacles, and for what reason? They’ve been brought for human entertainment.

As the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has indicated, they are the largest animals on earth and live an average of 50 to 70 years: beautiful creatures, great memories, highly intelligent with intelligence levels comparable to dolphins.

What’s disturbing in today’s world is that some elephant trainers still use outdated, cruel methods of training such as bull hooks or ankuses or even electric prods. So instead of using positive reinforcement—positive reinforcement—this is negative reinforcement. It’s not something that we use on our children or our own pets, but this is what elephant trainers do use. In today’s world, that’s no longer acceptable.

1620

I encourage all members of this House to support Bill 69, an act to amend the OSPCA Act.

But I also want to encourage members of this House to watch a wonderful movie, a wonderful romance story, called *Water for Elephants*. Has anybody heard of that in the House? It tells a story about what circus life was like back in the 1930s, and it clearly shows excessive use of a bull hook while training elephants. These bull hooks were used to make the elephants compliant. I’m not going to divulge too many more details of that particular movie, because I’d like everybody to go out and rent it and enjoy it, but I will say the elephant eventually com-

plied once they determined that the elephant understood Polish. He didn't understand the bull hook; he understood Polish. So it pays also to learn a second language.

This brings me back to my previous point regarding memory and intelligence. My colleague from Scarborough Southwest has done great research, and we found out that there were about 65 instances where elephants have rebelled with tragic consequences. I suspect that this behaviour is due in part to the fact that they remember the abuse that they have endured from their trainers.

Instead of using bull hooks as negative reinforcement tools, they should be using positive reinforcement. Using bull hooks or any other tools used to inflict pain on elephants is not acceptable, and it's time to end this practice and pass this legislation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I rise today to speak to the elephant protection bill.

I'd like to begin by thanking all of the members who spoke: the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke; the member from Scarborough Southwest, who has introduced this bill; the member from Parkdale-High Park; and, of course, my seatmate, the member from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell.

You know, as elected officials, we often talk about the fact that we have been elected to represent the people in our riding, to give a voice to those who have no voice. Well, I believe truly that we have been elected not just to represent the people in our ridings or the people in Ontario but the truly voiceless, and that includes the animals who inhabit this planet with us. I know it's very easy to ridicule this idea, but really, when you think about it, we do have a duty not just to the people of Ontario but to everybody: all sentient beings who live in this province of ours and, for that matter, on this planet.

I believe that through the ages—

Mr. Paul Miller: What about seniors?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I'm sorry?

Mr. Paul Miller: What about seniors?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Would the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek please come to order.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I'll get to that.

Through the ages, I believe that man has had an uneasy relationship with animals. On the one hand, we have often shown exemplary affection and devotion to animals, and on the other, we have shown exemplary inhumane cruelty to them as well.

I think that while the details in this bill are really important, which is about how to treat elephants humanely, this bill is more important than just the details, because I think it recognizes the basic fact that all sentient beings have the right to be treated right. That's what this bill really is about.

Quite frankly, even as a child, I recall that I was quite uncomfortable going to zoos, not because I didn't like animals or I wasn't curious, but because I really, really

didn't like to see them caged up. Even today, I am very uncomfortable, for instance, going into a pet store to see little puppies in these little, tiny cages waiting for somebody to buy them. It breaks my heart.

This bill really is about giving a voice to the voiceless, and I'm really pleased to be able to stand up today and do that. I hope all sides of the House will respect this idea and support this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Scarborough Southwest certainly could have concentrated on the 600,000 people in Ontario that are out of work, not that we have any disrespect at all for animals. I did watch the video, his press on this thing, and I think as was mentioned, it's kind of inappropriate, really, in terms of quite a push message on it. But I want to be very clear: On this side of the House, no member here whom I can see would in any way be in favour of any kind of support of cruelty to animals—let's be truthful about that—whether they're domestic animals or animals for our quality of life.

There's a huge issue here, but in my riding, I put it on a different level. In my riding of Durham I have three quite significant zoos as well as animal sanctuaries. I'd like to give a little credit to them because, from that perspective, Bowmanville Zoo in my riding is the oldest private zoo in North America. It's a voice in conservation and education. It has really been quite a leader in CAZA and the other organizations. The owner, Michael Hackenberger, is among the world's leading trainers, and his animals are in demand—some might disagree with this—for movies, TV commercials, magazines and advertising. You might say that the three most famous constituents in my riding, who have all appeared in many movies—Angus, Vance, Caesar and Limba are a few of the names of the animals that come to mind from the Bowmanville Zoo. I was happy to bring my grandchildren there. They have a great Christmas pageant. It has been filmed by CBC. It's a wonderful zoo and a very caring place for children to be exposed to animals and to learn how important they are in our lives.

In fact, Limba stopped briefly in front of my constituency office just this past week on the way downtown in Bowmanville for a local promotion. They're a very important part of the community.

The zoo is an accredited member of CAZA, the Canadian Association of Zoos and Aquariums, and it's a popular tourist destination as well. But I would be wrong not to mention that there are other zoos in my riding that I believe are worth mentioning.

Jungle Cat World: Some of you would see that on the way to Peterborough. Its proprietors are Wolf and Christa Klose, and it's operated by their sons Peter and Michael. It's Jungle Cat World; they have all the exotic cats in the world.

On the other end of my riding, up in the north part, is Northwood Zoo, an animal sanctuary, where Norm Phillips is the owner and trainer; and Anthony Vanzuilekom,

also a world-recognized trainer in zoos and in animal training, I guess. Some people may not like that.

I want to acknowledge that Susan Morris from my riding, who is probably involved with organizations like PETA and stuff like that, called. I did try to call her and speak to her.

But I in no way would condone anything that causes cruelty to animals.

I want to leave some time for my constituent. Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill 69. As a cattle farmer myself, I think I have a very clear perspective on the importance of the safe and humane treatment of animals. No one—at least, no right-thinking person—condones animal abuse.

Let me start off by saying that time permits me only a truncated opportunity to speak to this bill. If the member from Scarborough Southwest had the memory of an elephant, he would remember that just two weeks ago, his colleagues and he voted against changes to the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, the act that covers the humane treatment of animals in this province. His rationale for voting against any changes proposed by the member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills was that the current act offered all the necessary protection for animals. By his vote, he indicated that he didn't believe that there were any deficiencies or oversights in the act, and yet just two weeks later, he is singling out one animal for extra attention.

This is an animal—one of hundreds of species—not native to Ontario. Was it one of the domesticated farm animals that exist, one of the millions in this province? No, Mr. Speaker. Presumably, after watching the movie *Water for Elephants* or maybe his copy of *Dumbo*, the member from Scarborough Southwest decided that elephants should be singled out for extra protection.

The other elephant in the room is why he has not sought to protect other circus animals or exotic animals. Aren't snakes cuddly enough for the member opposite? I guess he doesn't care about giraffes, lions or tigers. Those animals travel in circuses too. They need the protection just as much.

The act actually suggests that it be made illegal to restrain an elephant with a rope or other tether. Fairly light mesh-wire fences allow free-range chickens in this province. A slightly stronger fence allows free-range cattle. Does the member from Scarborough Southwest believe that we should have free-range elephants in Ontario?

1630

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: I appreciate this opportunity to comment on Bill 69, An Act to amend the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act to protect elephants. It was the choice of the member from

Scarborough Southwest to bring this forward, and I think we should talk about it, because it's his choice.

I've spoken to him a couple of times privately about animal issues, and he's very concerned about animals, as everyone here is; we are. But I do speak against this bill, and why I do is because he wants to put a subsection under "distress." To me, and to many, especially in the rural communities, distress is the same for all animals. If an animal is under distress, it's under distress, be it an elephant or a mouse. That's the one fault that I find with this bill. You can't have a bill that covers animals in general, which is the OSPCA Act, which we do have problems with; we would like to change other parts of this bill to make it into what we think would work better. But to specifically point out one animal in this legislation, to me, defeats the purpose of the legislation.

One thing that turned me here, and I don't pretend to be an animal expert—I'm not—but I do know all about cattle. I've worked with them my whole life. It said you couldn't use an electric prod on an elephant. That may or may not be true. We should have someone who actually is an expert in elephants decide that, and I'm sure somewhere they have best management practices for elephants, because we do for cattle. There are occasions that you have to use an electric prod to save a cow's life. I'm not going to go into it, but I would be happy to do that. If a cow is stuck in a stall or something, they'll get really stressed out, and sometimes the only way—and I wish the member from Guelph was here; her husband is a vet. Sometimes they're so stressed out that if you give them a prod, it kind of shakes them so that they realize—and they sometimes will get up from that.

So if we bring this forward, and they say, "Okay, our next bill is going to be a private member's bill on cows, and we can't use electric prods"—well, who are we to say that electric prods are or aren't good? Maybe for elephants, they're not, and maybe the other things that are described aren't either, but this isn't the place to address that. The place to address that is whoever does the best management practices or makes the rules—the experts on elephants.

Elephants fall under this act. This act should treat all animals with respect, not point to one animal or another animal. I think that's where this fails, because you can't—it's too bad. When the member from Renfrew was talking—I have to get my joke in here too—I said, "Well, maybe we should have a special line for yaks," because they're also an animal.

Interjections.

Interjection: Yeah, we need to protect Yak. Protect Yak.

Mr. John Vanthof: And it's easy to make a joke, but the act should protect all animals, and it shouldn't pick one or another. We're opening a door. If this act actually comes into being, we're opening a door where we'll have to discuss, "Well, what do we do for cows?" or "What do we do for sheep?" or "What do we do"—best management practices exist for those, and we should make sure they exist, but they shouldn't be written specifically in

this act, because if you're going to do it for elephants, you're going to have to do it for an awful lot of species.

I know the member is trying to do the right thing. I know he is, and I respect him for that. All people who have had pets, who have commercial animals—the reason we have those, and the reason we have them for pets, or the reason we make a living from them, is because we love and respect animals. But to pick one out—I think we would be doing not only disrespect to the elephants but disrespect to the animal kingdom as a whole.

We should look for other ways to do it, to fix the act for all animals, but not make a specific clause for one species. Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I'd like to rise in support of this particular bill. I'd like to say something before I start. This is private members' business, not government business. This is a time when every private member has the right to bring forward what they believe in, to be able to move a piece of legislation forward based on their conscience. That goes for all members in this House, and ridiculing another member's bill is not respectful. In fact, if you don't like it, just vote against it, but ridicule serves no one well in this House—

Interjection.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I don't care where it comes from, it's wrong.

What we have in front of us is a bill that deals with two issues: elephants in zoos and the circus, not elephants running around on a farm. The fact of the matter is that an elephant prod is used on these animals in those two instances to make that particular animal submissive.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Would the member from Northumberland—Quinte West come to order, please.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: This animal, proven by research—and I give you the research: It's Diana Reiss from Columbia University; they started with dolphins, and it goes on with the Bronx Zoo, Frans de Waal and Joshua Plotnik from Emory University in Atlanta. They did some work along the same lines with dolphins, and whether or not there's a self-identification with this particular animal. They concluded there are only three—apes, dolphins and elephants—that have an issue of self-awareness. What they did is they put a large mirror in front of the animal, the animal recognized itself and actually started to touch the mark with its trunk, which meant it had an issue of self-awareness.

All we're saying is that if someone comes into this country, this province, with an elephant, they must treat that animal respectfully, and we will not accept the use of a prod. Prods are painful for elephants, and they're used to make them submissive; actually, there's significant proof that states that it makes them also extraordinarily aggressive. In Timmins, for example, there was an ele-

phant that did kill its keeper because it was prodded just once too often and it went on a rampage.

Again, I appreciate the other issues that have been raised. I respectfully say, they need to be able to have those discussions. As I said, what we're talking about here is very specific to zoos, making sure that they don't use this device, and to circuses, that they're not permitted to come in and entertain our children by actually using a device that hurts the animal that supposedly is entertaining them to make them submissive. That's all this bill says.

The Toronto Zoo, in fact, no longer uses this particular bull hook, and the reason is because it was proven to them that it was painful and unnecessary, that in fact what they could do, and should be able to do, is find alternative methods, which they have done in zoos around the world. All we're asking is for the same to be here in this country and in this province in particular.

Again, I say, Mr. Speaker, I think all bills that come before us in this House, regardless of where they come from, especially private members' bills, deserve thoughtfulness and respect from all members, not to be chided because someone thinks that it's lesser than something they bring forward. If you really do believe in the whole process of democracy—I appreciate you may not like the bill; that's fine, you have the option to vote against it. But certainly, to ridicule it is unacceptable behaviour in this House.

What I again would like to share with you, if I may, is that when you make an elephant compliant and you use something that actually hurts that animal—and remember, they also chain them so they have no way, obviously, to retaliate—that animal has one of the largest brains and has a memory, so aggressiveness builds up in the animal, and we've had significant examples of that aggressiveness throughout the years.

There was an example where a number of children were on an animal at the Bronx Zoo—they've since changed their habits; this was years ago—where a number of children were riding on the animal. The animal didn't perform its duty, so the handlers took the animal to the back and proceeded to kill it by using the prods extensively, five of them, until that animal was dead. That's not how we deal with humane issues.

The OSPCA does have some protection, but not to this extent. What we're saying, and I don't disagree, is that's an act that also could have a review, but at least have the conversation about what you believe in. Let it go to committee. Let people have an opportunity to talk about what's important to them—not just to you here, but to all of the people of Ontario. I can't think of one person I know who would sanction any animal being prodded with a prod to make them compliant.

1640

Remember, this is only about zoos, circuses and elephants; nothing else. It doesn't open up doors, as has been suggested. What it does do is remind us of our responsibility to those animals that do not have a voice.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Scarborough Southwest, you have two minutes for a reply.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I appreciate the comments made by various members around the House on this bill.

The important thing I'm trying to do today—I'm not unconcerned about the economy. I'm not unconcerned about education. I'm not unconcerned about health care. I'm just concerned about an issue that's dear to my heart. I own three rescue cats. Many here around the room own pets as well.

Elephants are a different category. They are perhaps the most intelligent animals on this earth, along with some apes and some dolphins. Elephants have cognitive abilities.

I'm trying to bring awareness to the issue. I honestly don't care if people want to defeat this bill today or move it to committee. What I want to do is bring awareness to a very important issue, and that issue is elephants.

The video shown earlier today, that was mentioned earlier, was filmed by people from PETA. The people from PETA were able to film the abuse that was used by Ringling Brothers Circus.

Tyke, the elephant I spoke about earlier, was in Canada just a week before it went to Hawaii. It was moved to Honolulu, Hawaii, and went on a rampage and killed people. A handler was killed by a circus elephant in Timmins, here in Ontario. If we don't consider this issue now, the problem is, it's going to happen in the future at some point in time. So I'm trying to be pre-emptive with this bill.

If someone believes that cows are intelligent—I'm not saying they're not—and they deserve special treatment, then bring forward a bill on that.

Through my research and through the science that I've seen, elephants are perhaps the smartest animals on the earth, and it's inappropriate to treat them the way they do in circuses and in some zoos.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

LABOUR RELATIONS AMENDMENT ACT

(FAIRNESS FOR EMPLOYEES), 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR
LES RELATIONS DE TRAVAIL
(ÉQUITÉ À L'ÉGARD DES EMPLOYÉS)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal first with ballot item number 34, standing in the name of Mr. Natyshak.

Mr. Natyshak has moved second reading of Bill 77.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the bill is being referred to—

Mr. Taras Natyshak: The Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): It's requested that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs. Agreed? The Bill is so referred.

ENSURING LOCAL VOICES IN NEW CASINO GAMBLING DEVELOPMENT ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 VISANT
À GARANTIR LA CONSULTATION
DES POPULATIONS LOCALES
AVANT LA CRÉATION
DE NOUVEAUX CASINOS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. McNaughton has moved second reading of Bill 76.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion, please say "nay."

I believe the ayes have it.

We will deal with the vote at the end of regular business.

ELEPHANT PROTECTION ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LA PROTECTION
DES ÉLÉPHANTS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Berardinetti has moved second reading of Bill 69.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the bill is referred to—

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: The Standing Committee on Justice Policy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): It's requested to have the bill referred to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy. Agreed? It's agreed. So referred.

Mr. Frank Klees: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member from Newmarket—Aurora.

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, I had asked that Bill 77 be noted as division. I don't think you heard me. I would ask for consideration, please.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I'd advise the member that the bill carried on a voice vote, but it will be so noted that you requested on division.

ENSURING LOCAL VOICES
IN NEW CASINO GAMBLING
DEVELOPMENT ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 VISANT
À GARANTIR LA CONSULTATION
DES POPULATIONS LOCALES
AVANT LA CRÉATION
DE NOUVEAUX CASINOS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Call in the members. It will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1646 to 1651.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. McNaughton has moved second reading of Bill 76.

All those in favour of the motion, please stand and remain standing.

Ayes

Armstrong, Teresa J.
Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Bisson, Gilles
Bradley, James J.
Campbell, Sarah
Cansfield, Donna H.
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Steve
Coteau, Michael
Damerla, Dipika
DiNovo, Cheri
Dunlop, Garfield
Elliott, Christine
Fedeli, Victor
Forster, Cindy
Gélinas, France
Hardeman, Ernie

Harris, Michael
Hillier, Randy
Hudak, Tim
Jackson, Rod
Klees, Frank
Kwinter, Monte
Leal, Jeff
Leone, Rob
MacLaren, Jack
MacLeod, Lisa
Mantha, Michael
Marchese, Rosario
McDonell, Jim
McKenna, Jane
McNaughton, Monte
Miller, Norm
Miller, Paul
Milligan, Rob E.
Natyshak, Taras

Nicholls, Rick
O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Pettapiece, Randy
Prue, Michael
Qaadri, Shafiq
Schein, Jonah
Scott, Laurie
Shurman, Peter
Singh, Jagmeet
Smith, Todd
Tabuns, Peter
Taylor, Monique
Thompson, Lisa M.
Vanthof, John
Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim
Yakabuski, John
Yurek, Jeff

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Please, could I have everybody let me finish the vote, please. And for other votes that we take in the House, it's really annoying that the House is so noisy and the Clerk is trying to get the count. I think a little bit of respect for the table would be really appropriate.

All those opposed, please rise and remain standing.

Nays

Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Brotten, Laurel C.
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
Duguid, Brad
Jeffrey, Linda

Mangat, Amrit
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Milloy, John
Moridi, Reza
Piruzza, Teresa
Sandals, Liz

Sousa, Charles
Takhar, Harinder S.
Wong, Soo
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 57; the nays are 19.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the bill is being referred to—

Mr. Monte McNaughton: To Finance and Economic Affairs.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Request that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs. Agreed? Agreed.

AMBULANCE AMENDMENT ACT
(AIR AMBULANCES), 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LES AMBULANCES
(SERVICES D'AMBULANCE AÉRIENS)

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 30, 2012, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 50, An Act to amend the Ambulance Act with respect to air ambulance services / Projet de loi 50, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les ambulances en ce qui concerne les services d'ambulance aériens.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order, please. At the adjournment of debate, the member for Richmond Hill had completed his remarks. Questions and comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'm going to get a chance to speak to this a little bit later, but I've got to say, the government's handling of this particular file has been less than stellar, I guess, would be the right way to put it.

Clearly, what's happened at Ornge is that you've had something really go wrong when it comes to the decisions that were made by that particular board and the people in charge. Clearly, there's something wrong, and what is really galling is that the government could take the high road and say, "Listen, that was the board. We don't know what happened. We should have a full investigation and allow the truth to come out so that, number one, we're able to learn what happened so that we can learn from those mistakes and try to plug the holes so we don't have the same thing happening again."

The unfortunate reality is what happens around this place sometimes is that government, or opposition, depending, tries to take ownership of something. It's almost as if the government's trying to take ownership of the decisions of Ornge and trying to defend them.

I'm sitting here and I'm going, "Why would the government do that?" At this point of the game, you've got to say to yourself, is it because they knew more that actually happened at Ornge? My original assessment—listening to what the Premier said, "We don't know what happened. We're calling in the police, and we're doing an investigation." Clearly, if there is no sense that there's any wrongdoing on the part of the government, you would allow a full investigation to happen to get to the bottom of it. I just say to the government, I'm a little bit taken aback by the taking of ownership of this particular issue.

I think if we were to step back in time and the government would have allowed the kind of things to happen that should have, we wouldn't be seeing every day on the front page of papers across this province the

spectacle of what we're seeing that happened at Ornge. I think the House would have been able, by way of public accounts or a select committee, to get the hearings they need to ask the questions that need to be asked and, more importantly, so that we can learn from the mistakes so they don't happen again.

This is the public's money. It's not the government's money. We need to make sure that we respect that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Because there were too many people standing when I asked for questions and comments, I missed the member from Durham, so I will recognize him.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you very much for that consideration, Speaker. I appreciate that.

On this bill, our critic on this, Frank Klees—for reference for members here, if they look up the Hansard from the 25th, his remarks, I believe, summarized our position almost perfectly. In that respect, what it says is, really, Bill 50 is redundant.

Under the current Ambulance Act, the provisions already exist for the oversight. In fact, with the witnesses in public accounts he was able to capture on the record from experts that the oversight of the minister was already in place, and yet in the House I'm told by the minister that she did not have that authority.

When I look at Bill 50, I'm wondering why we're spending time on this bill when we could have a select committee or, indeed, I believe, a full inquiry. There's been public money and health money on top of that—scandalous amounts of hundreds of millions of dollars wasted. We heard from witnesses just yesterday that some clerical person who submitted some clerical report was paid \$6 million. Other people were paid salaries over \$1 million a year, and yet patient safety, according to the records I read, was still at risk.

1700

This bill is the wrong way to approach this. We could have a select committee and get to the bottom of an organization that has gone rogue. I'm so disappointed that the minister won't do the honourable thing and step aside until this is resolved peacefully and amicably. This is about public health in Ontario. Bill 50 is the wrong way to approach it. I would like to use the word "cover-up," but you can't, so I won't. Well, I shouldn't. But in that respect, I think my point has been made.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Member for Trinity-Spadina, I have to go across because I mistakenly recognized the member from Timmins-James Bay.

The member for Guelph.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Thank you. I get to make my comments now.

I'm pleased to respond to the remarks of the member from Richmond Hill, but I do need to comment on the comments.

First off, this whole notion that we need to have a full inquiry, which the member from Timmins-James Bay mentioned: The Auditor General and the forensic audit team from the Ministry of Finance have both been in to

Ornge. All the material they discovered, which I agree was very distressing—nobody is saying we're happy with the situation. Their findings have been turned over to the Ontario Provincial Police. That's where the investigation is at the moment.

In terms of public accounts, we have been meeting hour after hour and have heard multiple witnesses from a variety of points of view. In terms of the member from Durham and his remarks, and this whole business around, "Do we need additional oversight," absolutely. I believe the Auditor General of the province of Ontario, who said there was inadequate authority for oversight in the old performance agreement in the old legislation. I believe the lawyer from the Ministry of Health.

Whom I don't believe, who is the authority that the member from Durham—we didn't get a chance to say where she was coming from, so I need her back. But the wife of the Minister of Health who actually initiated it—Mr. Clement initiated Ornge originally. His wife, who billed over \$11 million to Ornge, is the one who says the performance agreement was adequate. Well, of course. She was paid over \$11.5 million to defend the thing.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Newmarket-Aurora.

Mr. Frank Klees: What we have here is unfortunately a demonstration. We've just had a clear demonstration of what the government is trying to do and what they should not be doing.

First of all, there was an absolute misrepresentation about the billings of Fasken on the Ornge file. The member from Guelph knows full well, because she was given the billings, that it was not Ms. Golding's billings, and yet that's what she said. I would ask that the member stand up and correct her own record.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I would be very happy to clarify that it was Ms. Golding's firm that collectively billed Ornge \$11.5 million. Furthermore, we have asked Ms. Golding for the details—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Could you sit down for one second? I have not recognized the member from Guelph.

I have you on questions and comments.

Mr. Frank Klees: But it worked. It worked just fine, and I want to thank the member for Guelph for doing what I asked her to do.

Here is why we need to have that motion that was passed by the public accounts committee to broaden the terms of reference of the public accounts committee to essentially give us the terms of reference of a select committee, brought to the House and approved by this Legislature, so that we can properly investigate this, we can spend the amount of time with witnesses that we need.

The member for Guelph herself said she didn't have enough time with Ms. Golding and wants to have her back. That's why we need the broadened terms of reference so that we can have the appropriate time, truly investigate this; get to the bottom of it. I would say that what we will do is, we will continue to call on this government to respect the will of the public accounts

committee, the will of the Legislature. We'll continue to do that until this government listens.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Richmond Hill, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Reza Moridi: As we all know, there were problems at Ornge. The Auditor General reported that and also there were reports in the media. Our government took actions to fix the problems at Ornge. We all know that the old board of Ornge resigned, and the minister appointed a new board at Ornge. Since then, there have been various measures taken in order to fix Ornge.

One of the measures which our government has taken in order to fix the problems at Ornge is to amend the Ambulance Act, with Bill 50. Bill 50 is before us for debate in this House. I'm just going to quote a few major points of this bill.

One of the major points in this bill is the appointment of a supervisory special investigator when the ambulance service is not being operated in the public interest. It's like hospitals, where if—it's happened several times that when the hospital is not run properly, then the minister has the authority to appoint a supervisor. So this is one of the points in the bill.

The other one is, the minister can give directives to the air ambulance service providers in Ontario. Again, it's more or less like hospitals, where the minister can issue a directive if there are problems in the management of hospitals.

The other point is to prescribe performance measures and standards. This is another main point in the amendments to the Ambulance Act. Also, it allows the minister to establish terms that are to be deemed to be included in the performance agreement between the ministry and the air ambulance service providers. It also gives the provision to the minister to appoint provincial representatives to the boards of directors of air ambulance service providers.

So these are some of the measures which we have included in the amendments to the bill and that will help to refine the bill and finally fix the remaining problems at any service provider. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I'm now required to interrupt the proceedings to announce that there has been more than six and a half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader indicates otherwise.

Government House leader?

Hon. James J. Bradley: We'll continue the debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rob Leone: I stand here to speak to this bill. I want to suggest, first, that as a political scientist, as a specialist in public policy, we often talk about the need—the first step is for problem definition. One of the things that we have sought on this side of the House is to actually understand the gravity of the problem at hand. One of the ways that we can understand the gravity of the problem is to ask for a select committee on Ornge; and failing that, we'd like the Standing Committee on Public Accounts to adopt the terms of reference to further elaborate what the problems are in that organization. Since that's not happening, Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of debate.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order, please. The member for Cambridge has moved adjournment of the debate.

All those in favour?

All those opposed?

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1709 to 1739.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Can I have all members take their seats?

Mr. Leone has moved adjournment of the debate.

All those in favour, please stand and remain standing.

All those opposed, please stand and remain standing until you're counted.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 31; the nays are 2.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The debate has been adjourned.

Second reading debate adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Orders of the day.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The government House leader has moved adjournment of the House. Agreed? I have a bunch of noes.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

The ayes have it, in my opinion.

This House stands adjourned until Monday at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1741.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
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Coteau, Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
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Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
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Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington	
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Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West—Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest—Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
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Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges—Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton—Springdale	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
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MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton—Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean—Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga—Brampton South / Mississauga—Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity—Spadina	
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McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa—Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa—Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	

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Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Piruzza, Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
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Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
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Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
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Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	
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permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

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Gilles Bisson, Donna H. Cansfield
Steve Clark, Garfield Dunlop
Jeff Leal, Lisa MacLeod
Jonah Schein
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des comptes publics**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Toby Barrett
Toby Barrett, France Gélinas
Phil McNeely, Norm Miller
Reza Moridi, Jerry J. Ouellette
Liz Sandals, Jagmeet Singh
David Zimmer
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permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: John Vanthof
Michael Coteau, Grant Crack
Vic Dhillon, Randy Hillier
Rod Jackson, Mario Sergio
Peter Tabuns, John Vanthof
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

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la politique sociale**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ted Chudleigh
Ted Chudleigh, Dipika Damerla
Cheri DiNovo, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Ernie Hardeman, Tracy MacCharles
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Jane McKenna
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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First Session, 40th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

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Monday 7 May 2012

Lundi 7 mai 2012



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 7 May 2012

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 7 mai 2012

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ted Arnott: Page Carley Maitland is doing a great job here as a page representing Wellington–Halton Hills, and I'm pleased to welcome her mother, Jill Maitland, and her aunt, Kim Peel, who are here today as well.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm delighted to welcome guests from the Tibetan Parliament in exile: Norbu Tsering, Tsering Youdon, and also with them is Lhawang Jong-dong. Welcome.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I would like to welcome to the Ontario Legislature today Amie Tolton, teacher, with her grades 11 and 12 senior photography and visual arts students from Stephen Lewis Secondary School, Mississauga–Erindale riding. They are here to showcase Breaking Silence, exhibiting mental health portraits, so I want to extend welcome all the students and the teachers from Stephen Lewis Secondary School, but I also want to encourage the members to see their exhibition as well.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to introduce guests here today: Amy Phillips, who's a former Queen's Park staffer—welcome Amy; and a good friend as well, Christopher Sallie, also from my community of Bowmanville. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Reza Moridi: It's my pleasure to welcome Mr. Mike McRae and his daughter, Marisa McRae. Marisa is a grade 5 student from Richmond Hill and she's here to study governance. I also want to welcome my old friend Mr. Esmail Zahedi, the former president of the Canadian Society of Iranian Engineers and Architects. Please welcome them.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm proud to welcome to the Ontario Legislature today family friends from the town of Bothwell, Bill and Barb McMaster and Cameron McMaster. Welcome to Queen's Park. I would also like to welcome—I saw her in the hallway at Queen's Park today—former Liberal member of provincial Parliament from my riding Maria Van Bommel. Welcome back to Queen's Park.

Hon. Michael Chan: I would like to welcome Troy Young, the chair of the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario, and other members of the board. Please join us for a reception from 5 to 7 in the legislative dining room. To our guests, welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'd like everyone in the Legislature to give a warm welcome to my constituency staff that are down today, Bonnie Harrison and Donna Fournier. You can stand up, guys.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd like to extend a very warm welcome to members of Children's Mental Health Ontario, who are here today at the Legislature in celebration of Children's Mental Health Week. I look forward, as many other members of the Legislature do, to meeting with representatives from CMHO this afternoon to discuss the mental health needs of children and youth.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I'm pleased to introduce today my daughter Brooke and my bride of 35 years today, my wife, Dianne.

In addition, I would also like to welcome a former page from Chatham–Kent–Essex back to Queen's Park: Oliver Campbell and his mother, Linda.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Speaker, would you please help welcome the Kingston Accommodation Partners who are here today. They are Murray Matheson, Heather Ford, Jeff Garrah, Rob Carnegie and Bill Swan, and they're seated in the gallery over here.

Mr. Michael Harris: I'd like to welcome Jeremy Wittet today from Kitchener–Waterloo, a former assistant to the great Elizabeth Witmer. Welcome, Jeremy, to the Legislature.

Mr. Kim Craiton: I'm extremely proud to introduce the parents of Thomas Mingle. Thomas is one of the students who's on the minister's student advisory council. That's Louisa and Tom Mingle, and they're here in the gallery.

I also want to mention how talented our riding is, because I also have another student from my riding, Connor Bitter, who's here with the Minister of Education's student council, and his parents, Lisa and Clark Bitter.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'd like to welcome Shirley Wong, who's in the visitors' gallery. Shirley is a University of Waterloo accounting and business student currently volunteering in my office. Welcome, Shirley.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'd like to introduce the student advisory council and their parents and guardians who are all here today. Welcome.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: The Tourism Industry Association of Ontario joins us today, with Gary Masters, Bill Swan, Marie Lalonde and Murray Matheson. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Miss Monique Taylor: Point of order, Mr. Speaker: I believe we have unanimous consent that all members be permitted to wear ribbons in recognition of Children's Mental Health Awareness Week.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton Mountain has asked for unanimous consent to wear the ribbon this week. Do we have agreement? Agreed.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm delighted to welcome the charming John Winston from Tourism Ontario, who is with us here today. Welcome, John.

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: I'd like to welcome a good friend to all members and to both sides of this House, the honourable Jane Holmes of the Woodbine Entertainment Group.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I want to welcome my granddaughter here. She's a former page: Rachel Rynard. She's with us today too.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And by way of celebration, I would like to bring to the members' attention, returning to the House, the member from Ottawa Centre after the birth of their first child. Congratulations.

It is now time for oral questions.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It has been pointed out that a tradition almost got broken, and it won't. In the Speaker's gallery is a former member. Maria Van Bommel is here, joining us. We welcome you.

A point of order for the member from Oxford.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I'm just reminded, as you introduced the member in the gallery, that I just wanted to let everyone in the Legislature know that at 11:45 we're having the flag-raising ceremony. The Dutch flag is being raised in front of Queen's Park to recognize Dutch Heritage Month in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's not a point of order, but it was a really good plug.

It is now time for oral questions.

1040

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier. Premier, the elections yesterday in France, Germany and Greece risk prolonging the slow growth and recession in Europe and also could exacerbate the debt crisis. Your budget, which rests on some very precarious assumptions around a mandatory wage freeze and international economic growth, is now in jeopardy.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, you have had no actions since the downgrade from Moody's, now two weeks ago. Let me suggest some action that will help us deal with growing international concerns. Will you support a mandatory, across-the-board public sector pay freeze to save us \$2 billion?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the question. There is, of course, good cause for us to remain optimistic about our future here in Ontario when it comes to our economy.

Not only is StatsCanada telling us that we lead the country when it comes to job creation, but they've just told us that we led the country in terms of building permits in March, at a value of \$2.7 billion. That's over twice that of the second-highest province. The construction industry in Ontario today is thriving. In the last two years, we've created 33,900 jobs, for a total of over 440,000 jobs in construction in Ontario. If there's one indicator—if there's one canary in the coal mine—that tells us about optimism for the future, it's building permits: people making investments and creating jobs right here in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Sadly, the Premier's Pollyanna approach on the economy seems not to have changed at all.

Premier, your budget rests on some very wobbly assumptions around achieving a voluntary pay freeze, which you've failed to do since you announced this policy in 2010, and international economic growth. It seems sensible to us in the PC Party to bring in a mandatory public sector wage freeze across the board. Whether you're a doctor, teacher or firefighter, all of us should share in this. This will save \$2 billion to the taxpayer and address an unfairness where private sector workers are paying more and more in taxes to the public sector that have wages and benefits beyond what is happening in the private sector.

So I'll ask you again, Premier: Since your voluntary wage freeze has been a dramatic failure, will you endorse our approach, a mandatory public sector wage freeze, to save us \$2 billion?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: No, we won't, Speaker. We won't endorse that approach. We have our own approach.

We made it clear in our budget in a very specific way that we will sit down with our labour partners; we will enter into negotiations. Our objective is to ensure that there are no increases in overall compensation over the course of the next couple of years, to begin. We've made it clear that should we not be able to achieve those objectives at the table, then we will take other measures. We made that very, very clear, but we feel a sense of responsibility. Furthermore, we feel obligated to follow the law set up by the Supreme Court of Canada when it comes to dealing with our public sector partners.

So we're not going out there looking for a fight, as my honourable colleague opposite would have us do, but we will stand up for taxpayers to ensure that we hold the line—press the pause button for a couple of years.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Through you, Speaker, to the Premier: This sort of weaselly use of the language—"other measures"—has not accomplished anything in the last two years. In fact, we've seen public sector wages and benefits accelerate way beyond what's happening in the

private sector under your government. It is the single, biggest driver of expenses—over 55% of the overall budget.

Speaker, if the Premier refuses to take action that is fair and reasonable, the Ontario PC caucus will take that action. In fact, Premier, if you refuse to act, we will bring in our own bill that will be a fair and reasonable mandatory public sector wage freeze across the board, to treat all of us equally and save taxpayers \$2 billion. If you won't act, will your members support the PC bill that will bring in a mandatory public sector wage freeze?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague will know that we've been engaged in discussions, for example, with our doctors and our teachers. Undoubtedly, there will be more to come. We're now in what I guess you'd call the short strokes—down to the short strokes—when it comes to our conversation with the doctors. I'm sure that my honourable colleague will want to be supportive of the approach that we are taking, although I'd like to hear him on this score.

Our intention is to secure a net freeze in terms of compensation—I mean a real freeze; nothing in between—to ensure that we can, in fact, as we invest more dollars into health care, put that into more home care, for example, and more community-based care, as opposed to compensation for our partners the physicians.

I expect that my honourable colleague will at some point in time express his public support for the approach that we are bringing in this regard.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: Well, I have. We believe that the total compensation package should be frozen.

My question back to you, Premier, is, why don't you believe that should apply to the rest of the broader public service? If you think it's the right approach in this circumstance, why aren't you doing it for the rest of us, whether that be teachers, whether it be firefighters, whether it be administrative staff or managers? It seems to be reasonable that we should treat everybody fairly and equally—an across-the-board public sector wage freeze for us all that will save us \$2 billion.

Premier, why won't you endorse a policy across the broader public sector that makes sense from the taxpayers' point of view and gets us out of this fiscal mess?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think we may have some common ground here. I think we share the same objective, but I would argue that we are going about the attainment of our objective in a more thoughtful, responsible and lawful way.

Speaker, we are obligated to sit down with our partners to make a determined effort to negotiate a settlement that meets the targets that we've set in our budgetary plan and honours our commitment to the people of Ontario, who want us to press the pause button when it comes to compensation for a couple of years.

Furthermore, I remind my honourable colleague that the Supreme Court of Canada has spoken out on these

matters in a very definite way, as has one Don Drummond in his report, who we objectively approached, being recommended by my honourable colleague.

We are, in fact, working with all of our public sector partners, and we will secure what we need to do on behalf of the plan that we—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: It's hard, Speaker, to understand the Premier's argument. Sometimes he says that the Supreme Court is an obstacle, then he says it's in his favour—

Interjection: A lot of wiggle words.

Mr. Tim Hudak: —a lot of wiggle words from the Premier.

To me, the matter is clear. There should be a mandatory public sector wage freeze for all of us in the broader public sector, across the board.

Premier, your approach won't apply to colleges and universities; it won't apply to municipalities. Quite frankly, sir, you continue to kick this can down the road, and the can is growing bigger all the time—a \$30-billion deficit we're staring into.

The CFIB recently put out a report that said that a public sector worker is making 27% more in wages, benefits and pensions than the equivalent private sector worker. I don't think that's fair. A way of helping to address this in the world of a \$30-billion deficit, Premier, is a public sector wage freeze across the board for the broader public sector. It's too bad you won't do it.

If you won't act, we will, and we ask for your members' support in making this a law in the province of Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I say to my honourable colleague, he's in a decided minority in the approach that he advocates. You might want to take a look at the approach being brought by all the other provinces, I believe eight out of nine of which are running deficits; and the federal government, which is also running a deficit. All of them have rejected the approach being advocated by my honourable colleague.

Why is it that they are doing that? Why is it that governments of all political stripes facing deficits have rejected the approach being championed by my honourable colleague? Because it doesn't work; because we feel a sense of responsibility to sit down with our partners in the public sector, and we also feel duty-bound to honour the legislative requirements set up by the Supreme Court of Canada.

We will get there, Speaker. We will achieve our objectives, we will meet the targets we set out in our budget, but we'll do it in a way that's in keeping with our responsibilities.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'm sad the Premier does not have the sense of responsibility that says leadership means

taking immediate action to address our fiscal crisis. You had a downgrade two weeks ago; you're on credit watch. The Premier says, what about the other provinces? Premier, the deficit that you have dug is greater than the combined deficits of all the other nine provinces combined. That's why we need action in Ontario. That's why we need to take a courageous course that is right, reasonable and fair.

Premier, we've seen you wiggle off the hook before. You had a secret deal with OPSEU that gave wage increases after the election campaign. We have seen, between 2004 and 2009, that public sector pay went up 19% on average, way beyond the private sector, particularly families on fixed incomes.

It is the right thing to do. The time for action is now. Will you support our bill for a public sector wage freeze across the board and save Ontario families \$2 billion?

1050

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: No, Speaker, I will not support the approach recommended by my honourable colleague. I am with Prime Minister Harper on this. I am with all the other provinces on this. I am with Don Drummond on this as well. And I'm with Ontario businesses and Ontario families on this. They want us to act in a responsible way. They want us to act in a way that's going to guarantee that we're going to achieve the result that we have to achieve.

My honourable colleague would have this tied up in the courts for years. He would engender all kinds of labour strife in Ontario. He likes to pick fights. We have a decidedly different approach. We're going to sit down with our collective bargaining partners on a one-to-one basis. We will achieve the objectives because we have to.

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Does the Premier agree that government appointments should be based on the ability to do the job and that partisan calculations by the Premier or those around him shouldn't be a factor?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Yes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, this weekend, people all over this province read unnamed Liberal sources claiming that the Premier bragged to his caucus about plans to force by-elections by offering opposition members government appointments.

Now, if we want to know why people are cynical about politics these days, Speaker, we don't have to look any further than stories like that. People want to see politicians here work together to actually get things done for them.

Can the Premier tell us exactly what's going on?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, we're always looking for partners of any political stripe when it comes to moving ahead with a positive, progressive, balanced, thoughtful agenda. I say to my honourable colleague, as I said to those in the official opposition as well, if there are

any people on those benches—and I want to be very public about this, Speaker—who want to come over and sit on this side of the floor, they will be welcomed with open arms and they will be treated graciously—

Interjections.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: This is very difficult for me to say, but there will be no exceptions. They'll all be welcomed.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, people are looking for leadership from their government during tough times, and stories like this—and, frankly, behaviours like this—just turn them off. They're concerned that a Premier would abuse the public appointments process for his own partisan needs. They're concerned about the complete contempt that that shows for other MPPs. And they're most concerned because it means the Premier is more worried about his political challenges instead of the challenges that they face each and every day—challenges like looking for jobs, challenges like finding child care for their kids, challenges like caring for their aging parents. Those are the challenges they want us to be focusing on.

Can the Premier tell those people exactly what his priorities are?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I don't know how much credibility my honourable colleague attaches to unnamed sources, but I attach no credibility whatsoever.

What I can say is that if my honourable colleague is looking for a part when it comes to protecting health care, when it comes to protecting education, when it comes to creating more jobs, when it comes to ensuring that children growing up in Ontario today can look forward to their future with the same sense of optimism that we and our parents did before us, then she's going to find a strong partner right here in the government of Ontario.

ENERGY POLICIES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. Over here, we're focused on getting results because people are worried about jobs and the growing cost of living. They need results. We've been clear that we're ready to offer positive alternatives for change, and one example is tackling the growing privatization and top-heavy bloat in our hydro system.

Is the Premier ready to work with other parties on change to bring price relief to consumers and businesses in this province, or is he going to offer more of the same old cynical politics?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I welcome the question. My honourable colleague will know that the Minister of Energy has spoken to this on a number of occasions and we believe that we have a responsibility to look for efficiencies as we rebuild what was a dilapidated and unreliable electricity system. In fact, we're rebuilding 80% of it over the course of the next 20 years.

But we've got to look for internal efficiencies. That's why we wanted to go ahead with the merger of a couple

of our hydro entities. We're also going to take a look at our local distribution companies to see if it makes any sense for us to combine the responsibilities that they've taken on. So again, the end result would be less pressure on hydro bills for Ontario families.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, we've put forward some pretty simple proposals. Start with a review that looks at the system and the role that public power could have in stabilizing prices, and make private power contracts like the ones for cancelled plants in Mississauga and Oakville public so that we know what we're actually paying for.

Is the Premier ready to work with us to make affordable hydro available to businesses and households in this province, or is he focused on making life easier for his government?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I know that certainly the slogan of public power hearkens back to an earlier time, in fact over a century ago. But the fact is, we have public power here in Ontario. We're very proud of that. Ontarians own the electricity system that we have in place. It's taken us a long time to develop that and it's close to all of us, Speaker. But the fact of the matter is that it was unreliable. It was at risk when we first formed the government.

We have, I think, invested in some 9,000 megawatts of new generation to this point in time. We have rehabilitated, repaired or renewed some 5,000 kilometres of new transmission. That would take us from here to the Yukon. At the same time, we are shutting down our coal-fired generation, we are cleaning up our air, and we're investing in an exciting new renewable energy industry, creating thousands and thousands of jobs.

I think that's the responsible way for us to deal with public power for the people of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: On the contrary, Speaker, hydro in this province is largely privatized, almost completely deregulated. We know that private companies are making all kinds of profits on the generation of power in this province. Even the green energy system is largely privatized, thanks to the way that this government decided to implement the Green Energy Act.

What we are ready to do over here is to roll up our sleeves and work with other parties on making life better for everyday people. The mess in our electricity system is a really good place to start. When rates for business are as much as \$3 million more here in Ontario than in other provinces, we need some real change. Is the Premier ready to focus on challenges like these, Speaker, which are killing jobs and draining family budgets, or is he more concerned about the challenges that are facing the Liberal Party these days?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the opportunity to engage in this with my honourable colleague, but I think, in fairness, that at some point in time the NDP need to tell us where they stand on power. We know that

they oppose nuclear power. They oppose the development of new gas generation in Ontario. They oppose the development of renewable energy in Ontario. They oppose the shutdown of coal-fired plants in Ontario; at least I would garner from their refusal to consider new sources of clean energy that they would do that, Speaker.

I think what they need to do is, together with that slogan of public power, drag their policy development from beyond a century back, bring it kicking and screaming into the 21st century, and tell us where they want to go when it comes to meeting the future demands of Ontarians when it comes to electricity in our province today and tomorrow.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is to the Attorney General. The Mount Pleasant Group of Cemeteries was originally established in 1826 as a public trust for the people of Toronto. Today, the group remains a public trust, and in a letter dated October 12, 2006, from the Office of the Public Guardian and Trustee, it was confirmed to be "a charitable institution." The letter also stated, "We will work with it to address this specific concern," that had been repeatedly raised to that office about the operation of the group.

Minister, despite repeated requests for both financial and operational information, both to the public guardian and trustee and to your office, to whom it reports, nothing has been forthcoming for the past six years. Why are you refusing to take action with respect to this rogue organization?

1100

Hon. John Gerretsen: I'd like to thank the member for the question, first of all. She well knows that the corporation was set up in the 1820s, which is a long time ago from now.

To the best of our knowledge, the Mount Pleasant Group has never received any public funding and has never been a crown corporation. It may be categorized as such by some organizations and some people, but it's not. The initial funding that allowed for the establishment of the organization came from private donations.

I understand that discussions have been going on both within my ministry and the Ministry of Consumer Services on an ongoing basis with the Mount Pleasant Group, and it's my understanding that some arrangement has been made whereby their records will be made more public—to the general public. We're working on that, but it's not a crown corporation and it has not received any public funding.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: In no sense have we suggested that it's a crown corporation, but, as the Attorney General will know, it is a public trust and has remained so since 1826; it's also a charitable organization, which makes it subject to the Charities Accounting Act. As you know, the public guardian and trustee can request infor-

mation from a charitable organization whenever they see fit.

Numerous questions have been raised by many groups about the operation of the Mount Pleasant Group of Cemeteries, and shockingly it appears that despite all of these requests that have been made to your office and to many cabinet ministers, including the Premier, nothing has been done for six years. Minister, the public deserves to know what has been done with the money generated by the Mount Pleasant Group of Cemeteries. Where are the profits, Minister, and where have they gone?

Hon. John Gerretsen: The member is a lawyer, and a lawyer in good standing, and the member well knows that when you've got a dispute between an organization or two different groups of people, we have a method in dealing with that, and that method is the court system in Ontario. The court system is highly regarded, and these kinds of disputes can be handled there. If there's really such a grave concern, why isn't the necessary action taken by whatever group feels that they are not getting the proper information? We'll let a judge decide as to what should happen.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Michael Mantha: My question is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Cliffs Natural Resources is expected to make an announcement this week about the Ring of Fire following closed-door discussions they've with the Ontario government. A number of First Nations communities like Aroland, Marten Falls and Webequie are concerned that they have been excluded from this process.

I hope the minister would agree that for the Ring of Fire to work for everyone, First Nations can't be put on the sidelines. Will the minister explain the status of discussions with Cliffs and whether any commitments have been made to date?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: We know one thing for sure: that the Ring of Fire offers incredible potential to the entire province, it offers incredible potential to our First Nations community in northwestern Ontario and it offers incredible potential to the communities in northern Ontario and all across Ontario. We take our duty to consult very, very seriously. We are committed to ensuring that consultation is on an ongoing basis because we realize that in this instance the Ring of Fire is an opportunity that we don't want anyone to miss out on.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Mantha: Although Cliffs Resources may build a processing facility in northern Ontario, the company has indicated that it may only partially process ore here, shipping the semi-processed ore overseas to China. If our communities are going to get the most out of the Ring of Fire potential, we need resources mined in Ontario to stay in Ontario. Will this government make sure that all the resources mined in the Ring of Fire are processed in Ontario?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: The reality is, as we enter into this new era of opportunity for all of Ontario with regard

to the Ring of Fire, we want to ensure that we maximize the potential for job creation for everyone across Ontario. If you look at the supply and services sector, you look at the processing sector, you look at the exploration and development sector, there are incredible opportunities. We want to make sure we maximize those opportunities for all the people of Ontario.

NURSES

Ms. Helena Jaczek: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Today is the first day of National Nursing Week, a time dedicated to acknowledging and thanking Ontario's nurses for their invaluable contribution made to our health care system. As a physician myself, I've worked for years side by side with nurses as part of a health care team, and I'm grateful for all I that I've learned from them. Nurses work selflessly and tirelessly every day to keep Ontarians healthy.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, to the minister: What has your ministry done to ensure Ontarians benefit from nurses providing front-line care here in Ontario?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member from Oak Ridges-Markham for this important question. This is an opportunity to say thank you to all of Ontario's nurses for everything they do for patients every day.

Today there are almost 13,000 more nurses working than when we took office in 2003, and 1,100 more nurse practitioners who are now able to diagnose, prescribe, treat and discharge hospital in-patients. They're also now able to order lab tests and complete and sign death certificates. Twenty-one nurse practitioner-led clinics are now delivering care to more than 23,000 patients in Ontario, and these clinics will soon number 26. They're made up of nurse practitioners, registered nurses, registered practical nurses and other providers. When they're fully operational, 40,000 Ontarians will benefit from nurse practitioner-led clinics.

Happy Nursing Week to all our nurses.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Thank you to all the nurses for the hard work they do to support patients across the province.

Minister, as you've noted, nurses have an important role to play in our health care system and possess many skills to help patients in hospitals, at home and in community settings.

There is more we can do beyond hiring more nurses. Through you, Mr. Speaker, to the minister: Can you tell the House how the Ontario government is providing nurses the opportunity to expand their scope of practice based on their skills and knowledge?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We know that Ontario's nurses are the backbone of our health care system. They're working on the front line. They play a crucial role in patient care. We need to get the most out of the skills and knowledge that nurses possess, which is why we've created five new nursing roles in order to do exactly that. One of those roles is the registered nurse

surgical first assist, in which specially educated registered nurses work collaboratively with surgeons and operating room teams.

Of course, our action plan, Speaker, will ensure that patients have access to the right care at the right time and the right place. That means we need to help more seniors receive the care they need in their homes, where they want to be. That clearly means a bigger role for registered nurses, registered practical nurses and nurse practitioners.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, my question is to the Attorney General. On Thursday of last week, I asked the Attorney General to refer very specific information concerning reports of illegal business practices by Augusta-Westland to the OPP, the RCMP and to the United States justice department. Those reports included alleged kick-backs and bribes in a deal involving the sale of 12 helicopters to India by the same company that did business under similar contracts with Ornge. Can the Attorney General tell us today what he has done with that information?

Hon. John Gerretsen: First of all, of course, if the member has any allegations with respect to any suspected criminal activity, he should be notifying the OPP himself.

You and I know that the OPP is in the middle of an investigation right now surrounding various aspects relating to Ornge etc. That's ongoing. I'm quite sure that the information that they have is being looked at as well. They'll continue with their investigation, and they will take the necessary action in due course.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, the Attorney General's response to this question is very similar to the response that the Minister of Health gave me in April of last year when I first raised concerns about what was going on at Ornge. She listened, she defended, she folded her hands and did nothing. The Attorney General knows full well that his responsibilities on the executive council are to be the law officer of the executive council.

Yes, I will send that letter to the OPP as well as the RCMP as well as the justice department in the United States, because it's very clear that this Attorney General will have nothing to do with passing on important information about, quite frankly, the worst scandal that this province has ever seen. I want to know why. I want to ask the Attorney General why he refuses to assume his responsibility as the law officer of this province and not pass on that information himself.

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Hon. John Gerretsen: Speaker, we are very proud of the work that's being done on a day-to-day basis within the Ministry of the Attorney General, and the member well knows that.

Any information that is received obviously goes to the policing authorities. We do not direct the police. They have their role with respect to investigations. They're do-

ing that right now. They will take all material that comes to their knowledge into account and, in due course, they will take the necessary actions that the situation demands. That's what's happening right now.

If the member has any particular information that he wants to share with them, either send it to them directly or send it to us; we'll send it on to them.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is for the Minister of Education. People for Education reported that up to half of Ontario's schools are facing board-imposed caps on special needs assessments. That's as low as two students per year. That means many students are falling through the cracks.

Minister, why weren't you aware of these board-imposed caps?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I want to thank People for Education for their report. They are such an important partner, and I look forward to continuing to work with them closely in this regard.

Making sure that every student can achieve their very best is the responsibility of all of us working together in education, and that's why I look forward to the opportunity to work with People for Education and others in this sector to continue to build upon the successful investments that we have put in education, in particular in special education. Special education funding is up since our government has taken office—18% since 2003; 15% of Ontario's students are receiving special education. We should be very proud that the students receiving special education services are succeeding. We are seeing grade 3 writing scores up by 30%. That's something that we should all be very proud of.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, that was an extraordinary non-answer. The minister has effectively admitted she doesn't know what's going on in the education system, and the only people who actually know are citizen activists who are going out and getting the information.

Students with special needs need timely assessment. They need good, quality special education. The reality is that students in elementary schools are not being assessed. There's been an increase in unassessed students by 50% in a year. Special needs teachers have seen their class sizes or their workloads grow by 30%.

Will the minister actually act like a minister and launch an independent public review of what's going on with special education?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I have previously had an opportunity to speak directly with Annie Kidder and let her know that we look forward to working with People for Education to ensure that all of our students are getting the supports that they need in our schools, Speaker.

It's very important to know that whether assessed or not, our expectation is that every student will get the special education supports that they need; in fact, the

facts are that one third of students who receive special education programs are not formally identified.

This government has worked for many years now ensuring that students in our schools get the services they need. We've increased investments in children's mental health; we've increased investments in autism services. We've ensured that special needs support in our schools remains, despite the fact that Mr. Drummond said that 70% of those folks who are not teachers in our schools should no longer be there. We know that they do important work. We've continued to make investments. We're always looking for ways to make sure that our services are better, and that's what we will do.

AEROSPACE INDUSTRY

Mr. Reza Moridi: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development and Innovation. Ontario has always been known around the world for our prosperous auto industry and the critical role it plays in this major global industry. What is less known is the aerospace industry in Ontario. From a proud past, including the development of the Avro Arrow, to the world-class cluster that has developed in our province today, Ontario has been on the cutting edge in the global market when it comes to aerospace development.

Can the minister please inform this House of some of the notable achievements and strengths of Ontario's aerospace sector?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm delighted to bring some light to some of the great things happening in our dynamic aerospace industry.

Ontario's aerospace industry is growing. It's worth about \$6.5 billion and it's employing 22,000 Ontarians. Ontario is in a unique position, with over 350 companies contributing to the sector, including 13 of the top 25 aerospace firms like Bombardier, Com Dev and Goodrich, who all have a very significant presence here in this province. Eighteen universities and colleges offer 36 aerospace-specific programs, including aerospace engineering at Carleton, Ryerson and the University of Toronto.

Ontario-made parts are used in virtually every passenger aircraft in the world, and we're recognized as a world leader in several areas, including turboprop aircraft, business jets, turbo engines, landing gear systems and space robotics. There's no question Ontario's aerospace industry is fast becoming a global success story.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Reza Moridi: Mr. Speaker, it's great to hear that Ontario has such a large and diverse aerospace industry. I would never have known that on almost every passenger flight, there is a made-in-Ontario product.

Minister, you mentioned that some 13 of the 25 industry-leading companies are located here in Ontario, specifically mentioning Bombardier. I have always known them to be a Quebec-based company, but through recent media coverage and their visit to Queen's Park last

month, I have begun to understand that they have a significant presence here in our province of Ontario.

Can the minister please elaborate on some of the exciting work coming out of Bombardier in Ontario?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Bombardier is a true global leader when it comes to the aerospace industry, and I'm very pleased to talk about some of the success that's going on with Bombardier here in Ontario.

Just last week, Bombardier signed a contract to supply WestJet Airlines with 20 to 46 turboprop Q400 aircraft. According to the Globe and Mail, that's an investment in our economy of \$1.3 billion. It's great news for the 4,000 workers at Bombardier's Downsview plant and it's great news, frankly, for workers right across the province.

Bombardier is making its mark in the green innovation field as well. In April, through Porter Airlines, Bombardier launched its first commercial flight using biofuel. In setting new environmental standards, the Q400 aircraft uses 30% to 40% less fuel—the Minister of the Environment is very happy with that—and produces 30% to 40% fewer emissions than its predecessors.

Bombardier is a global leader in the aerospace industry, another Ontario innovation and technology success story.

SKILLED TRADES

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question today is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Minister, currently a journeyman tradesperson here in Ontario pays \$20 per year to have his or her certificate of qualification renewed. Your job-killing College of Trades is suggesting a massive increase in membership fees for all tradespeople in Ontario.

Minister, will you stand with Tim Hudak and the PC caucus and assure all journeymen tradespeople that they will not see another Liberal tax grab and see their renewal fees increased by the College of Trades?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Woody Allen once said, "I never want to be a member of a club that would have me as a member," for a whole lot of reasons.

Mr. Speaker, this is sort of comical. Again, a party that could never deliver more than 60,000 people in apprenticeships, a party that saw apprenticeships growing by 17,000 a year, a party that had been in power for 40 years that left, as part of its legacy, a complete lack of competitiveness in apprenticeships now wants to lecture this government.

We have 120,000 people in the trades, growing by 30,000 per year. We are ahead of our targets for 2025. We are meeting demand. One day, maybe my critic will stand up, apologize to the people of Ontario for their failure and congratulate this government on its success.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Minister, that is a pathetic answer for a question that is supporting our already over-taxed working men and women.

Remember, a journeyman tradesperson pays \$20 a year now. The website of the College of Trades is proposing new fees of up to \$200 annually for a journeyman. That's a 1,000% increase for a tradesperson. This is completely scandalous. The college has had virtually no dialogue with the tradespeople of Ontario. Worse, we know your job-killing College of Trades is in bed with your Working Families Coalition.

Minister, will you stand with Tim Hudak and the PC caucus and once and for all kill this Working Families/College of Trades boondoggle?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It's interesting. Not only is the party opposite hemorrhaging members; it can't even get along with his former caucus members.

Ron Johnson very clearly has put forward a very dynamic agenda there, one that I wish, in spite of our best efforts to collaborate—the member opposite, had he attended the reception here with the College of Trades, would have seen the incredible diversity of business and labour leaders and educators who make up the College of Trades.

It's interesting. When the College of Trades sends out surveys and democratically engages the apprentices and the businesses and labour leaders and associations that work so hard to produce high-quality training, he criticizes that. When they come down to Queen's Park, while 17 members of the party opposite said they were going to show up, not one showed.

If you want to be ignorant and not take any information, not participate in a process—you end up getting questions like that from the member opposite.

CONSERVATION

Mr. Jonah Schein: My question is to the Minister of the Environment. On Friday, I was in Brantford and Cambridge to meet with the Grand River Conservation Authority and Brantford citizens who are fighting to protect the environmentally sensitive Hardy Road area of Brantford, which is now at risk by proposed development. The city of Brantford wants this area protected from development as part of the waterfront master plan. Will this government support the elected officials of the city council of Brantford and protect this important piece of land?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I can tell you that our government is very much in favour of environmental protection. That's why we have a Ministry of the Environment.

Whenever there are proposals that come forward to the Ministry of the Environment, we give very careful consideration to those proposals. We analyze them using the best information that could be provided to us. Our ministry staff, who are highly trained and highly educated, do a great assessment of all proposed projects, and then we provide the very best advice we can. We also take into

account the views of the local people, particularly those who are the elected representatives in the area, and have our input when these decisions come forward to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

So you can be assured that we have a great concern in this area and will do what is appropriate.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jonah Schein: Back to the Minister of the Environment: I was very honoured to be given the tour of the Hardy Road area. It's beautiful. It's of huge ecological significance and archaeological heritage. It's connected to Brantford's main source of drinking water. It should be protected from development.

I'm proud to say I'm with citizens of Brantford who have fought hard and long to protect this area, but why won't the government protect this provincially significant wetland area and support the elected officials in Brantford? Instead, why are you giving it over to the OMB to do this work?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I think the member would like to hear from the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing on the procedure that is followed, so I'll allow her to answer that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Just defer.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: On the specifics of this case, if there are issues that you'd like to bring forward to me or to the Minister of the Environment, we'd be happy to see them.

But what I would like to say is that the planning regime that we have put in place in Ontario, right from the provincial policy statement to Places to Grow to the greenbelt—all of those pieces of legislation and those plans have really changed the culture of development in this province, and the purpose of that change of culture has been to protect much of the sensitive land that certainly surrounds the GTA and to preserve agricultural land and preserve those sensitive areas.

So I'd be happy to look at the specifics of this case, but I think we need to remember that land that was not protected previously is protected because of the planning regime that we have put in place.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a question today for the Minister of Natural Resources. Constituents in my riding of Oakville have contacted me about your ministry's three-year transformation plan. I understand that the 2012 budget proposes a series of amendments to nine pieces of legislation to protect our province's natural resources. Some of my constituents have expressed their concern that the transformation may change MNR's commitment to protect Ontario's natural resources.

Minister, all of us have a role to play, obviously, in contributing to the government's commitment to balancing the books by 2017-18, and I know MNR is doing its share. Minister, would you share with the House and with my constituents how your ministry plans to modernize itself while ensuring you protect Ontario's vital natural resources?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Let me thank the member for Oakville for that question; it's an important one, certainly. Let me begin by saying that the Ministry of Natural Resources is very proud of our long and respected history of overseeing the management and conservation of Ontario's natural resources. We want to be sure we maintain that commitment, which is why we've embarked on a three-year transformation plan to actually help us deliver our services more efficiently, to potentially streamline some of the permits, policies and processes that are in place but also, as I say, to maintain that commitment.

I am aware that some groups are raising concerns about our plan, specifically around the perception that there's going to be limited opportunity for public consultation. I want to assure Ontarians that that is not the case. If the budget bill is passed, we will be consulting extensively on any proposed regulatory change. Any change will be posted on the Environmental Registry for public review and comment, and I invite all people who are interested and concerned to speak with us and sit down with us.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: People in Oakville will be glad to hear that response.

In 2007, our government introduced the Endangered Species Act, and since that time, it has gained much international acclaim. That was opposed by the official opposition. I'm pleased to note that today the act protects more than 200 vital species at risk. As you are well aware, there are questions being raised now specifically about the changes proposed to the Endangered Species Act that are outlined in the budget and how they are going to affect our good standing record on species at risk.

Minister, I know that our government's commitment to the protection and the recovery of native species in the province is unwavering, but I want you to assure Ontarians and the members of this House and explain how the proposed changes to the Endangered Species Act will affect native species in the province of Ontario.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Again, I appreciate the question, and I certainly want to say that under our proposed changes, the Endangered Species Act will continue to be a North American leader in protecting endangered species.

The proposed changes also will maintain that necessary balance we often speak about for endangered species protection while at the same time reducing red tape and providing some greater certainty for business, which we know is important for them as well.

While I recognize that there are challenges ahead, I believe we are very much on the right course. May I also say that I'm encouraged, certainly, by the Environmental Commissioner, Mr. Miller, when he pointed out that our plan can be well done? What he really said was that "big-picture ecosystem management is superior to micro-managing individual species," and we appreciate that.

Let me remind you again: Regulatory changes—anything proposed—will be posted on the Environmental Registry for public review and comment.

AGGREGATE EXTRACTION

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. Minister, as you know, at the Standing Committee on General Government last Thursday, only 12 hours were set aside for public hearings on the aggregate resources review act—all in Toronto. Minister, I know you understand that aggregate extraction occurs in many communities in Ontario, with the exception of Toronto. Will the minister commit today to direct his Liberal colleagues on the committee to accept our motion for increased hearings and for the committee to travel to communities where aggregate extraction actually takes place?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thank you very much for the question. Certainly, we are very, very pleased that our motion passed and the all-party standing committee is working on the aggregate resources review—a very important one. We made a commitment to move that review forward; that has happened.

Certainly, we do understand, as I think everyone does, how important aggregates are, but we also understand that there is a need for us to look at how we can improve the legislation. It is the decision of the all-party standing committee in terms of those kinds of decisions.

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As for public hearings, I want to encourage everyone who is interested in presenting to bring forward their thoughts and presentations. Also, there will be other opportunities, I know, through a variety of other circumstances, teleconferences as well, to bring their feelings forward. We're very excited and very pleased that, indeed, the review is taking place and that the all-party standing committee is beginning their work today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Laurie Scott: Again to the minister: Your Liberal members of the committee, as well as the NDP, blocked my suggestions to have extensive hearings—which you promised during the election—on the AR act. Many of the presentations that are scheduled are already booked with Toronto-based officials. In fact, public notice just went out today and the clerk's phone is ringing off the hook. But so far, we have not yet booked a single municipality or individual. Without an extension of the review period and a commitment to travel to other locations, there will be little or no opportunity for input from communities who are most knowledgeable on what is working and what is not with the ARA.

Again I ask the minister, will you ask the Liberal members of the standing committee to agree to travelling hearings for the ARA review, to expand the number of hearings beyond the meagre 12 hours already scheduled?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: To the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. John Milloy: The Progressive Conservative Party cannot have it both ways. I mean, on the one hand, they talk about the autonomy of committees and the ability of committees to set their own agenda and to decide what they want to study, and now they're standing

up and asking us to interfere in the work of the committee.

The simple fact is, it is our government that took the initiative to ask the committee to review the Aggregate Resources Act. We gave the committee the power to determine how to do it. They discussed it and decided to schedule as has been outlined by the member.

I would point out, Mr. Speaker, we are in a minority Parliament. There are more opposition members than there are government members, so don't stand here in the Legislature and try to blame the government for a decision that was made by the committee, based upon consultation and discussion and, as I say, a majority of the members, which outstrip the number of Liberals who were there.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. The community start-up and maintenance benefit has provided thousands of social assistance recipients with emergency financial support to avoid eviction and homelessness. The Hamilton Community Legal Clinic says that the government's decision to cut this benefit by 50% and transfer the remainder to municipalities will "lead to more homelessness in Hamilton and in communities across Ontario."

Why, we ask, is the McGuinty government making a decision that experts say will actually increase homelessness?

Hon. John Milloy: I thank the member for the question. Mr. Speaker, as I've admitted in this House before, we had to make some hard decisions when it came to the recent budget. At the same time, I would outline to the member that investments, going forward—there are really only three areas where the government is investing significantly. That is in terms of health care, education and the final one, social assistance, where we're seeing an average increase moving forward of some 2.7% in my ministry and in that of the Ministry of Children and Youth Services.

In terms of CSUM, Mr. Speaker, it's a housing benefit. As the honourable member is aware, we are right now in the process of finalizing a long-term housing strategy which takes a number of programs under my ministry and transfers them to municipalities, removing many of the rules and barriers which have not allowed municipalities to spend that money in a way that's appropriate.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Again to the minister: The community start-up and maintenance benefit is the absolutely last resource many people have before being forced right out onto the street. It's a homelessness prevention program. Now this program's funding is being cut by 50%. How will the government ensure that municipalities actually use the transferred funds to help people avoid eviction and homelessness? We'd like some answers on this. And what guarantee will the government give that

more people on social assistance will not end up on the street because of this very cut?

Hon. John Milloy: For a long time, housing advocates have recognized the fact that we have a variety of programs which are offered by my ministry, programs which are offered by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, which have been very difficult for municipalities to administer. There had been tight rules around them and there had been barriers around them. We have situations where municipalities are spending literally thousands of dollars to support someone in a setting and not have that capacity to take that money and put them in a more appropriate setting and offer the support.

What we are talking about through this new program is giving municipalities the flexibility they need to start to plan, to start to work with their communities and use this money that's aimed at keeping people at risk out of homelessness situations, and finding homes and supports for them and making sure that they can move forward. This is the approach coming forward. This is something that poverty advocates have long called for. This is something the municipal sector has wanted for a long time, and it's going to mean a big difference for those in poverty—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

AIR QUALITY

Mrs. Teresa Piruzza: My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Protecting the quality of air we breathe is a fundamental concern for Ontarians and is of significance in the Windsor area.

As temperatures begin to increase throughout Ontario, so too does the amount of outdoor air pollution such as smog. We know that smog-causing pollutants contribute to respiratory and other health problems for thousands of individuals every year. The traditional smog season in Ontario occurs between the months of May to September. However, they can occur at any time throughout the year.

Speaker, through you, would the Minister of the Environment please share with us what our government is doing to ensure Ontarians are properly informed about smog episodes?

Hon. James J. Bradley: There are many factors that affect how much smog we get in the province of Ontario.

The ministry, as you know, issues advisories when there's a high probability of elevated smog levels occurring within the next 24 hours. During smog advisories, Ontarians are encouraged to lower what we would call smog-causing emissions by walking or biking to work instead of driving and are advised to avoid unnecessary exposure to smog by reducing outdoor physical activity.

In the past several years, our government has taken strong action to reduce smog in Ontario. We've shut down 10 of the 19 coal-fired electricity generating units and have reduced reliance on coal-fired electricity by more than 90% since 2003.

In 2008, 38,000 tonnes less of smog-causing pollutants were released due to the Drive Clean program, and

our government remains committed to improving air quality in Ontario so everyone can breathe a little easier.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Teresa Piruzza: I know that the residents of Windsor are often looking for those types of initiatives to come forward.

I understand that our government has been working hard to reduce the smog at source, and in the past several years, we've seen a substantial decline.

On April 22 of this year, and in honour of Earth Day, the Ministry of the Environment released its 40th annual Air Quality in Ontario report. This report summarizes pollutant concentration levels measured at the ministry's reporting stations and also highlights trends over time.

Speaker, through you, could the Minister of the Environment please provide the House with the findings of this report?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'm pleased, Mr. Speaker, to note that the state of our air quality in Ontario is indeed improving. The report found that, overall, levels of air quality contaminants have decreased over the past 10 years and the number of smog advisories have declined in recent years.

Our government has taken many steps to improve air quality. We've moving away from dirty coal to clean, renewable energy. We also introduced new standards for industry with respect to outdoor air pollutants. These standards are among the toughest in North America.

Air pollution does not recognize geographical boundaries. Ontario is taking action locally, regionally and globally to protect the health and environment of its citizens now and in the future. So I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that every time we take a specific action which is designed to improve air quality in the province, we see a measurable improvement, and we have certainly noted that since the year 2003.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is to the Attorney General and, again, it concerns the Mount Pleasant Group of Cemeteries. It has been recognized that the group is both a public trust and a charitable organization, and is therefore subject to the jurisdiction of the Office of the Public Guardian and Trustee. Numerous complaints have been made about the operation of the group over many years to that office and to your office, yet no answers have been forthcoming and no financial information has been produced over the past six years. You say, Attorney General, that you're working on it. What exactly has been done over all these years?

Hon. John Gerretsen: It's my understanding that both the Minister of Consumer Services and my own ministry have been trying to make this much more transparent than it has been in the past. But you should also know—and you probably know this already—that the group itself follows all the rules and regulations of the Cemeteries Act, which is really our responsibility.

Let me just finally say once again that if two groups of individuals do not like what's going on in society, there

is a method by which we can deal with that, and that is through our court system. We have a highly recognized court system that is extremely well regarded, and I would suggest, if the answers are not forthcoming as quickly as the group wants, that they take the necessary, appropriate legal action.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Toronto—Danforth on a point of order.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, I need to correct the record. In my question to the Minister of Education, I said words to the effect of, "There has been a 50% increase in the number of special needs students going unassessed." It should have been "a 50% increase in the number of elementary schools who have special needs students not being assessed."

Thank you, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is a point of order, and the member is allowed to correct his own record.

The member from Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Point of order: Speaker, I respectfully request that members of the Tibetan Parliament in exile be recognized by this Legislature. Indeed, it behooves us all here in a free democracy to support those who wish the same while being oppressed.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's not a point of order, but we welcome our guests being here in the Legislature of this province. Thank you.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bramalea—Gore—Malton on a point of order.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, I'd ask all the members of the Legislature to join me in welcoming the family of page Ranbir Singh: his mother, Kulbir Singh, and brother, the future me, Jagmeet Singh.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We always welcome our guests here at the people's place.

There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1142 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. John O'Toole: Earlier today, Monday, May 7, Peggy and I—our youngest daughter, Rochelle Trainor, and her husband, Jason, had our ninth grandchild. Congratulations also to Bob and Dianne Trainor of Sault Ste. Marie. Emilie Mollie Trainor was born at about 2 in the morning, I guess, at six pounds, five ounces, at the University College Hospital in London, England.

More miraculously, on May 7, 1982, Rochelle's mother, Mollie passed away, on that very same day 30 years ago today. It is a miracle.

Congratulations to Rochelle and Jason.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I welcome our guests to the gallery.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

JAMES MARKER

Mr. Todd Smith: I'm sad to inform you that a great Canadian entrepreneur from eastern Ontario has passed away. Halloween just won't be the same this year. James Marker, the inventor of Hawkins Cheezies, died last week at the age of 90.

In the mid-1940s, Mr. Marker, a young Ohio farmer, was looking for a way to preserve corn to feed his cattle year-round when he built a special device to turn the corn into porous sticks. That's when Chicago-based confectionery giant W.T. Hawkins came along and the cheezie was created.

When the US company went broke, Mr. Marker moved in 1949 to lovely Tweed, Ontario. In 1956, that plant in Tweed burned to the ground and the company, 30 days later, was back in business in Belleville, where it continues to churn out the tasty treats today.

Jim Marker used to call the cheezie the greatest snack food on earth, and many kids all over Canada have pulled the familiar red, white and blue bag of Hawkins out of their treat bag every year at Halloween.

More than being just a successful entrepreneur, Marker helped found the Belleville Airport, served on the executive of the Belleville Rotary for more than a decade and was an active community citizen for generations.

Might I point out that up until March of this year, Mr. Marker would go into the plant, or have three bags delivered to his home that he would sample, just to make sure the product met the standards that he had set. And he lived until he was 90, Mr. Speaker.

He will be greatly missed by the president, Kent Hawkins, and the GM, Tony McGarvey, and all the staff at the plant in Belleville.

CITIZENS' AWARD

Mr. Paul Miller: This Thursday, the Stoney Creek Chamber of Commerce is holding its annual Citizens of the Year Awards ceremony for outstanding community contributions in 2011. As expected, the recipients are an excellent cross-section of citizens and businesses who have made an extraordinary contribution to our community.

Linda Shuker is citizen of the year. Linda has headed the wildly successful annual Winona Peach Festival for many years. This weekend-long event includes arts, crafts, vendors, car shows, concerts, great local food and fabulous peach tastings and recipes.

Other "crickers" honoured this year are Amanda Cicero of Cardinal Newman Catholic Secondary School, who is junior citizen of the year; McHugh Mowat Whitmore Ionico MacPherson law firm, the outstanding large

business; Donald V. Brown Funeral Home, the outstanding small business; ArcelorMittal Dofasco, with the community recognition award; Bertram and Barry Insurance, with the legacy award; and Colin Heyens, Orchard Park Secondary School, receives the humanitarian award. It is particularly rewarding to see two young people honoured this year.

I am proud of the work done by groups like the Stoney Creek Chamber of Commerce in continuing this recognition of our local individuals and businesses that have made our community such a great place to live. I congratulate all the recipients and I thank each of them for their contributions to Stoney Creek.

ASIAN HERITAGE MONTH

Ms. Soo Wong: Today I'm pleased to stand in this House to recognize Asian Heritage Month. This year marks the 10th anniversary of the government of Canada declaring the month of May as Asian Heritage Month, an idea originally brought forth by Senator Vivienne Poy.

This year's theme for Asian Heritage Month is Advancing Democracy, Strengthening Canada. It is an appropriate theme, as this marks the 65th anniversary of the repeal of the Chinese Immigration Act. This act was used to prevent Chinese immigrants from coming to Canada. Between 1923 and 1947, fewer than 50 Chinese immigrants were allowed to come to Canada.

By celebrating Asian Heritage Month, we celebrate and acknowledge the contributions made by people like internationally renowned architect Raymond Moriyama, Dr. Tak Mak, the Right Honourable Adrienne Clarkson, Ryerson University Chancellor Raymond Chang, award-winning author and filmmaker Michael Ondaatje, and actress Sandra Oh, to name a few. It also provides us with an opportunity to appreciate the everyday contributions of Canadians of Asian descent.

At a time when some countries have denounced multiculturalism, Canada and Ontario stand alone as the envy of the world for its admiration and respect for diversity. I'm proud to live in a country which recognizes the contributions of Canadians of Asian heritage. I hope you will join me in acknowledging their valuable contributions in making Canada and Ontario the greatest places to live.

ORGAN DONATION

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: It certainly isn't every day that members on all sides of this chamber form a consensus on any issue, but I am pleased to see that the important matter of organ donation is something about which we can all agree.

Two months ago I tabled Bill 58, in which I called on the government to make a very minor change to the process for issuing health cards and driver's licences. The bill proposed that every applicant be asked whether or not they would agree to register on the Trillium Gift of Life organ donation registry. It was at that time, I'm sure,

a pure coincidence that the government chose to make the announcement that they agreed with that suggested change on the very day my bill was to be debated for second reading. Regardless of how they chose the date, it was the right thing to do, and the minister should be congratulated for that.

I have only one criticism of the announcement made by the Ministry of Health. They have indicated that the questionnaire will be rolled out in only 91 ServiceOntario offices and the balance of the 300 offices won't receive the questionnaire until 2013. Surely it won't take a year for the ministry to photocopy 209 additional instruction sheets and accelerate the timetable for the province-wide adoption of the questionnaire.

The ministry should do everything in its power to ensure that the new questionnaire is implemented province-wide without further delay.

MAXXAM ANALYTICS

Mr. Bob Delaney: It's time to congratulate a cutting-edge western Mississauga business for its forward-thinking co-op program for skilled immigrants. Maxxam Analytics launched a program in 2001 for skilled immigrants. That program offers the same training that other new employees and Canadian graduates receive.

Co-op students learn about basic health and safety in a Canadian laboratory, new tools and programs for sample testing, as well as the company's own standard operating procedures. They get the Canadian experience that so many employers look for.

Maxxam Analytics tests environmental products, food and water samples. It has brought in some 400 co-op students since the start of the program and hired half of them upon completion of their co-op program.

In recognition of this program, Maxxam Analytics was awarded the Toronto Star Award for Excellence in Workplace Integration at the sixth Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council Immigrant Success Awards.

Our western Mississauga friends, neighbours and co-workers are building families, communities and careers through enlightened training programs such as this one at Maxxam Analytics. Congratulations to Maxxam's CEO, Jon Hantho, and to all the employees at Maxxam Analytics. It is one reason why Mississauga has become such a magnet for skilled newcomers in Canada.

TOURISM

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Tourism is a way for us and people from around the world to enjoy what Ontario has to offer. It is also a key industry, generating over \$21 billion in revenues and supporting over 600,000 jobs in close to 150,000 businesses across Ontario.

In 2009, the province received \$3.7 billion in direct tax revenue from the tourism industry. Nevertheless, this government is making decisions that will hinder tourism in Ontario. The HST increased the cost of rooms and numerous tourist events by 8%.

The proposal to close all three travel information centres in northwestern Ontario will hurt the north's existing tourism industry and will create a barrier to expanding tourism in new areas.

The cancellation of the slots-at-racetracks program will decimate Ontario's horse racing industry and a unique tourism draw for people visiting our province.

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Worst of all, in none of these cases were members of the tourism industry consulted. In 2009, after consulting with the tourism industry, the government released its own report intending to make Ontario a prime tourist destination. Most of these recommendations have been ignored.

Today, we face fiscal disaster because of our growing debt. Our economy is becoming increasingly uncompetitive and our businesses are saddled with red tape and poor economic policies. Credit rating agencies are screaming that Ontario is going down the wrong path.

Our tourism industry is an economic driver in Ontario, and I would urge this government to change its focus. Look at our industry leaders to generate growth through economic activity instead of through increased taxes.

FOOD BANKS

Miss Monique Taylor: Unfortunately, my seatmate was unable to be here to do his statement, so I'll take advantage of his time and tell the folks of the Legislature about an event that I attended this weekend.

It was quite the event. I slept outside in a box for hunger on Friday night. It was quite the experience, let me tell you.

The food bank in my riding is up 30% since this time last year, so there's a huge need in my community to raise awareness and money to feed the shelves at the food bank.

It was definitely something. I mean, yes, we had the comfort of 30 other people out there doing the same thing, but at the end of the night I was alone in my box and it was cold, it was dark, it was windy, the tarp's blowing around through the night. It just left a feeling of eeriness inside of me and something I will never forget.

I was really fortunate to have many great sponsors to help me out in this initiative and I was able to raise \$2,100 for my food bank. Hopefully, other people will take up this initiative and be able to do the same thing in their neighbourhood, because we're definitely hoping that next year we'll be able to double the numbers of attendees at the event.

THE HOSPICE AT MAY COURT

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: It's a great pleasure of mine to celebrate 10 years of the Tracy Arnett Realty Hike for Hospice, raising funds for the Hospice at May Court, a very special place in my riding of Ottawa Centre.

Yesterday, from 9 a.m. to noon, participants took a five-kilometre hike through the streets of Old Ottawa

South, beginning and ending on the grounds of the Hospice at May Court.

Rob Clipperton, former host and producer of CBC radio in Ottawa, was master of ceremonies for the day.

To mark the 10th anniversary of the hike was "The Power of 10" campaign to raise \$120,000, 10% more than last year and representing 10% of the total annual fundraising goal of \$1.2 million.

The Hospice at May Court is a community-based charitable organization that offers palliative and end-of-life care services for over 600 patients and their loved ones each year in a supportive and peaceful setting. The services are provided at no cost, in part with funds raised in the Hike for Hospice as well as financial support from individual donors, service groups, corporate sponsorships, foundations and the provincial government.

Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to thank all the volunteers and staff at the hospice, particularly Jean-Pierre Soublière, the chair of the board; Todd Burke, vice chair; Charles Armstrong; Louis Auerbach; Margaret Bloodworth; Janet Dunbrack; Vince Gilpin; Janice Horne; Heni Nadel; Michael Pentland; Jeannie Thomas; and also Margie Howsam, The May Court Club of Ottawa representative; Dr. Pipa Hall, the medical advisor at the hospice; and David Hogberg, the executive director of the Hospice at May Court. Congratulations.

EMERGENCY IN DUFFERIN COUNTY

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I rise today to thank the Dufferin county emergency management services and all those who responded to a terrible rainstorm that occurred last Thursday on May 3 in my riding.

The equivalent of a month's worth of rainfall accumulated in a 12-hour period. Many residents were affected by the storm, which included an intense downpour, high winds and hail. The damage is estimated to be as high as a million dollars.

As a result of the flooding, at least 20 people were evacuated from several homes and apartments, and some spent time in an emergency shelter at the Tony Rose Memorial Sports Centre. Family Transition Place, our community's only women's shelter, was also forced to evacuate because of flooding that damaged the electrical panel and flooded the facility.

The storm's intensity was unexpected, and the efforts of the Dufferin county emergency management services as well as the town of Orangeville and all emergency responders deserve to be recognized and thanked. Norah Kennedy, executive director at Family Transition Place, and her staff, who worked very quickly to establish an alternative temporary shelter, also deserve our thanks.

Other organizations assisted evacuees by providing personal items, food and water. The Salvation Army, students at Orangeville District Secondary School and businesses like McDonald's and Rexall Pharma Plus came to the aid of those who were displaced from their homes.

It's the efforts of the first responders and all the volunteers who helped so quickly that made a difference.

I want to thank them for their excellent work in the face of danger.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

LABOUR RELATIONS AMENDMENT ACT (ONTARIO LABOUR RELATIONS BOARD), 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES RELATIONS DE TRAVAIL (COMMISSION DES RELATIONS DE TRAVAIL DE L'ONTARIO)

Mr. Hillier moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 84, An Act to amend the Labour Relations Act, 1995 with respect to the Ontario Labour Relations Board and other matters / *Projet de loi 84, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur les relations de travail en ce qui concerne la Commission des relations de travail de l'Ontario et d'autres questions.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Speaker, this bill amends the Labour Relations Act, 1995, to remove the stated purposes of the act. The practice and procedure of the Ontario Labour Relations Board is no longer determined by rules made by the board itself but is determined by regulations made by the Lieutenant Governor in Council under this act.

At present, a party affected by the decision of the Ontario Labour Relations Board has no right of appeal. This bill provides a right of appeal to Divisional Court in accordance with the rules of court. It also makes members of the board and other officers compellable witnesses in any appeal or judicial review of the board's proceedings and makes the Minister of Labour and other ministry officials compellable witnesses before a court or tribunal.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH WEEK

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I rise today to recognize Children's Mental Health Week in Ontario, which is observed in the first full week of May each year.

Children's Mental Health Week has two critical goals: to increase awareness of mental health and to decrease the stigma associated with mental illness. Mr. Speaker, we all need to talk about this very important issue in our families, in our communities and across this province.

And we need to take action and give young people with mental health challenges the support that they need so that they can reach their full potential.

I'm proud to lead Ontario's comprehensive mental health and addiction strategy, a joint initiative of the ministries of children and youth services, health and long-term care and education. The first three years of our strategy focus on children and youth because we know that one in five young people in Ontario—that's about 500,000 children—are dealing today with mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, schizophrenia and eating disorders. We also know that 70% of mental health and addiction problems begin in childhood and adolescence. So, Mr. Speaker, how we invest in our children today will determine the quality of their lives tomorrow. That's why, in the first three years of our mental health strategy, our government is focusing on children and youth with an unprecedented investment of \$257 million.

Through our investments to date, approximately 20,000 more Ontario kids and their families are benefiting from quicker and easier access to mental health services and supports provided through community agencies, through youth courts and in schools.

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At this point, I should mention that at noon today, I and my two critics from the opposition parties and others had the privilege of attending the photography exhibit here at Queen's Park of students from Stephen Lewis Secondary School. They did this exhibit in recognition of Children's Mental Health Week. It is an extraordinary exhibit, and I urge all members of the Legislature to visit the exhibit. They're here for the duration of the week.

Because schools are often the first place where a young person with mental health needs is identified, that's why we've invested in more than 400 child and youth mental health workers hired to work with students in schools, to work with mental health agencies and to work with courts to address important mental health issues faced by children and youth in this province. It's why 144 new mental health and addictions nurses are being hired to work with schools to help students with mild-to-complex mental health or substance abuse problems. Over the next few months, we will continue to roll out services and supports targeted at children and youth with unique mental health challenges.

I know this is an issue which has both confronted and been important to all parties of the Legislature. I know that it's important that we recognize that the efforts that have been under way in past years to confront these challenges and build a stronger mental health system to support children and youth and adults suffering from mental health needs. It has been an issue which has been driven by compassion and commitment to nonpartisan effort. I want to acknowledge that all parties, particularly the two opposition parties, have worked hard with the government on advancing this important subject.

Beginning this spring, new aboriginal mental health and addictions workers will also be hired to provide cul-

turally appropriate direct services to aboriginal children and youth in high-needs aboriginal communities right across the province. We will also enhance and expand telepsychiatry services to provide more service to kids in remote, rural and underserved areas.

This is not a problem that we can solve alone. We work hand in hand, as I mentioned, with all members of this Legislature and with partners right across the province. These partners include agencies, umbrella organizations, advocates, clinicians, workers and donors like Margaret McCain, the former Lieutenant Governor of New Brunswick, who last month announced the largest private donation ever to child and youth mental health in Canada, a \$10-million gift to the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, CAMH. I was proud and honoured to be present for the announcement of Margaret McCain's generous contribution.

So I want to thank all our mental health partners who are working diligently with us to support the mental health and well-being of our children and our youth. Together, we can and we will help change the lives of young people in communities across this great province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Responses?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Thank you to the Minister of Children and Youth Services. I am pleased to rise today on behalf of our leader, Tim Hudak, and the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus to recognize Children's Mental Health Week.

We know one in five Ontarians will experience a mental health problem at some point in their lifetime, and that 70% of those symptoms will surface during childhood and adolescence. That's a population of around half a million young people currently wrestling with these issues.

Children's Mental Health Week is about increasing awareness of children and youth mental health problems, decreasing related and promoting access to help. This week is not just about wearing a ribbon to show that you care; it's about being honest about the progress we're making and challenges we face on the issue of mental health for children and youth.

Tomorrow, the federal government will release its first-ever national mental health strategy, one expected to reinforce and, where necessary, repair provincial strategies.

I am proud of the work of the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, a comprehensive report that began with my PC colleague for Whitby-Oshawa, Christine Elliott. The report's 23 recommendations had many recommendations calling for additional services for children and youth. Ontario has invested in prevention and early intervention at the expense of treatment, but trends indicate that we need both approaches. Researchers with the US Public Health Service have forecast that by the end of the decade, childhood mental health disorders will rise by over 50% worldwide. Parents from Children's Mental Health point out that despite the inroads that have been made in recent years, there is still a crisis in Ontario. Five in six children with mental health problems will receive no professional help at all.

In the shadow of the recent budget, we have seen this government squeezing efficiencies from our strained system and announcing plans to mothball various youth treatment facilities. We see this in events like the closure of facilities such as Thistleton Regional Centre, moves that have been undertaken without consultation or warning to the families that will be impacted.

Funding levels alone don't tell the whole story, of course. We can make real progress by seeing clearly, thinking creatively and asking critical questions rather than believing that funding alone is a solution.

In the course of my stakeholder consultation on this portfolio, I have learned that there is, in fact, excessive funding overlap. Several agencies have nearly identical mandates and functions.

As well, as with so many things in this government, we're obsessed with hitting targets in terms of inputs, rather than concentrating on clearly defined outcomes or objectives. The system should work towards common benchmarks, but we don't have those.

We also need proper assessments so that individuals can be streamed into appropriate and effective programs. But we can't have an effective system without well-trained specialists and professionals. There is a high need for clinical psychologists and psychiatrists—the average age of practising specialists is 62 in psychiatry, and 57 in psychology. This should be a warning bell.

We need more university spaces to train psychiatrists and psychologists who specialize in children and youth. The University of Toronto apparently has only two spaces open for child psychiatrists.

The focus right now is on psychiatry aimed at seniors. The problem and the solutions are staring us right in the face.

Do we care enough to act? Some certainly do, and so I would like to pay tribute to the professionals who devote their lives to the children's mental health field, including the agencies in my riding of Burlington—specifically the dedicated people at the Reach Out Centre for Kids, or ROCK. Over the past 35 years, ROCK has grown to become a leader in providing innovative, family-centred mental health services. It helps infants, children, teens and adults live their lives through early assessment and intervention, prevention, treatment and therapy for those having or at risk of developing mental health problems or mental illness.

Organizations like ROCK help families across Ontario. I would ask that you support them as you mark Children's Mental Health Week and continue to keep children's mental health in the spotlight year-round.

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm pleased to rise today to recognize Children's Mental Health Week.

All of us at times experience problems with our mental health. Often it's because of the loss of a close friend or family member, or it's as simple as a change in our employment situation. Thankfully, in most of these cases, these feelings are temporary and we work our way through it. But sometimes the feelings continue and they become overwhelming, and this can be a sign that there's

more going on that needs more attention. Perhaps there's a previously undetected mental health disorder that needs to be treated.

Some of these disorders are more prevalent than others, and sometimes sufferers fall victim to more than one.

ASD, autism spectrum disorder, affects one in about 88 people. Anxiety disorders: About 6% of our children have anxiety disorders serious enough to need treatment. ADHD affects 5% of children. These are just some of the many mental health disorders. They can be caused by chemical imbalances, exposures to toxins or genetic influences. They can be a result of abuse or neglect. They can come from low self-esteem, poor performance at school, stress at work, severed or strained relationships. This information and much more can be made available by Children's Mental Health Ontario, and I would encourage all members to take the opportunity to meet with one of them or their 85 member agencies across Ontario.

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These community-based mental health agencies are the backbone of Ontario's mental health system for children and youth. They provide treatment to our young people with a range of social, emotional and behavioural problems. The agencies are staffed by many dedicated professionals who do wonderful, wonderful work for their clients. Unfortunately, due to the way that the system has developed, there is little uniformity in the delivery of the services and treatments across the province.

Their strong community-based focus has meant a lack of mandated programs or regulations of the sector. As a result, not every agency is able to provide the same levels of training. They cannot ensure the same treatment and coordination of services, and they're found wanting.

In 2005, the government stated that the number one goal was for a child and youth mental health sector that is coordinated, collaborative and integrated at all community and governmental levels, creating a culture of shared responsibility. We're not there yet, Mr. Speaker, and I know that Children's Mental Health Ontario is keen to work with the government on system reform.

Last year's budget provided \$257 million over three years, but the previous two decades before that were marked by chronic underfunding that took years of toil onto the system. Throughout those years, agencies found efficiencies. They shared IT systems, they shared back office services with other agencies, and they used video conferencing to reduce their travel costs. They found efficiencies in clinical services such as the use of walk-in clinics and group work instead of one-on-one treatment, which we all know is very needed in this province, Mr. Speaker.

The changes also meant cuts to employee benefit packages, and some agencies are entirely without financial, administrative and supportive staff. On rare occasions when the government provided funding increases, none of that money was earmarked for administrative needs.

The dollars announced in June 2011 do nothing to address the lack of administrative, supervisory or travel costs available for these agencies. Yes—and you know that we’re strong on this, Mr. Speaker—we all know that we need to put money into front-line services, but without the funding to support the operations of the agencies, clients will continue to suffer.

As we celebrate Children’s Mental Health Week, let us rededicate ourselves to the collaborative approach that includes the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and the education and children’s mental health agencies.

PETITIONS

HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION

Mr. John O’Toole: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It’s nice to start this week. You look great in the chair there. My petition from the riding of Durham reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the province unexpectedly announced it is abandoning years of preparation, study and the signed Flow agreement that included a commitment to build the Highway 407 east extension in one phase to Highway 35/115; and

“Whereas the province, without consultation with the municipalities, and nowhere” in hearings held in the public was this ever mentioned to be phased in, “is now proceeding with a two-phased approach, stopping at Simcoe Street North in Oshawa; and

“Whereas this two-phased approach will mean significant financial, quality of life, safety and environmental setbacks for Durham region and its municipalities and hinder economic development, tourism and job creation for all of southern Ontario; and

“Whereas this two-phased approach will ultimately mean higher costs for all provincial taxpayers;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“We, the residents and businesses of southern Ontario, oppose any decision to terminate Highway 407 east in Oshawa or Clarington, and request that the province proceed with the Highway 407 East extension project as planned and promised, in one phase, from Brock Road in Pickering through to Highway 35/115, with a completion date of 2013.”

I’m pleased to sign and support this and give it to William, one of the pages here.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And you look good in the chair.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have a petition with respect to Bill 13, and it reads as follows.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“We, the undersigned citizens of Canada and residents of Ontario, draw attention to the following:

“Whereas, under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, every Canadian citizen has the following fundamental freedoms: the freedom of conscience and religion; freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication; and freedom of association;

“Whereas the preamble for Bill 13 makes no reference to protecting against bullying based on religious beliefs, political affiliation or any general association;

“Whereas Bill 13 removes freedoms of speech, religion and association by forcing the promotion of values, lifestyles and beliefs which a Canadian citizen may not agree with, which they are entitled to under the Canadian Constitution, and furthermore has the potential to lead to these freedoms being removed from private schools;

“Whereas Bill 13 will most likely remove the freedom of religion and freedom of speech by only allowing groups to rent space who will conform exactly to the code of conduct within each board;

“Whereas Bill 13 at a few points defines bullying in a very broad, subjective manner that leaves it open to wide interpretation, with the consequences for such behaviour being student expulsion;

“Whereas Bill 13 appears to enforce and enshrine fairly new policies and procedures at the school board level, such as the Toronto District School Board’s ‘Challenging Homophobia and Heterosexism: A K-12 Curriculum Resource Guide,’ where the parental rights are removed around gender and sexual education beginning at the age of three;

“Therefore, the undersigned petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to vote against Bill 13.”

It’s signed by a significant number of constituents in the riding of Kitchener–Waterloo.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Jonah Schein: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Toronto Transit Commission will have an estimated ridership of 503 million in 2012;

“Whereas the TTC received only \$91 million from the province of Ontario for operations in the 2010-11 fiscal year with a total TTC budget of \$1.5 billion;

“Whereas fare boxes account for 70% to 80% of total TTC costs, making it one of the highest fare-recovery ratios in North America;

“Whereas the TTC recommended another 10-cent fare increase to all riders again this year;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the province of Ontario pledge stable and long-term funding of the TTC and other municipally run transit authorities in Ontario and ensure that provincial funding be restored to 50% of the operating subsidy; and

"That transit authorities who accept that restored funding freeze or reduce their fares."

I support this petition and sign my name to it and give it to page Safa.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further petitions? The member from York South—

Mr. Mario Sergio: York West.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): West.

Mr. Mario Sergio: Yes. That's okay, Speaker; no problem.

I have a somewhat lengthy petition here with respect to first-time drivers and Bill 71 which I would like to read to the House, as it is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas new drivers, especially young drivers, face very difficult challenges in obtaining affordable automobile insurance; and

"Whereas the challenge is even greater when new drivers look to acquire their first vehicle, which is a huge expense in itself; and

"Whereas the difficulty is compounded when a new driver with no previous driving experience is penalized by paying thousands of dollars more, just because they happen to be new drivers; and

"Whereas new drivers should be given the benefit of the doubt and grant them with an accreditation of six years' driving experience in order to make automobile insurance available and more affordable to thousands of new drivers; and

"Whereas this benefit is extended to new drivers that have completed an accredited driving school course in the province of Ontario or North America; and

"Whereas approval of Bill 71 would be extremely helpful and beneficial for thousands of parents, and their young sons or daughters as well;

"Therefore we undersign this petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and ask the members of all parties to support passage of Bill 71 and give all new drivers an opportunity to prove themselves."

I support the content of the petition and will affix my name to it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank the member from York West for his petition.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the horse racing industry employs approximately 60,000 people, creates \$1.5 billion in wages and \$2 billion in recurring expenditures annually; and

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"Whereas the partnership that was created between government and the horse breeding and racing industry has been a model arrangement and is heralded throughout North America, with 75% of revenues going to the

provincial government to fund important programs like health care and education, 5% to the municipalities and only 20% goes back to the horse business; and

"Whereas the horse business is a significant source of revenue for the farming community and rural municipalities;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Finance continue the revenue-sharing partnership with the horse racing industry for the benefit of Ontario's agricultural and rural economies."

I support this petition, I'll affix my name and send it with Vincent to the clerks' table.

PELEE ISLAND FERRY SERVICE

Mr. Taras Natyshak: A petition on behalf of residents of Pelee Island and the surrounding area:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there is a critical issue going on regarding the ferry service to Pelee Island; and

"Whereas both ferries have been in dry dock undergoing maintenance work, leaving Pelee Island and its residents without transportation service, causing severe and undue hardship; and

"Whereas maintenance to the Jiimaan and the Pelee Islander should be done at the end of the season, not in the beginning; and

"Whereas both boats should not be serviced at the same time; as a result, the farmers on the island are losing the valuable spring planting season, and other businesses are losing business daily; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Transportation should be looking into alternate ferry boats to service Pelee Island. There are several options, which include: the ferry from Kelleys Island, McKeil Marine, Dean Construction and Nadro Marine, which have tugs and barges to transport farming equipment;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Direct the Ministry of Transportation to explore all options in order to implement the heavy-transportation needs of the residents and businesses of Pelee Island. Further, to direct the service providers to put together a plan to prevent further disruption to the ferry services of Pelee Island."

I agree with the petition, Mr. Speaker, and I'll affix my name to it and submit it with page Talin.

RADIATION SAFETY

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, which states:

"Whereas subsection 6(2)8 of the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act identifies dental hygienists as persons deemed to be qualified to operate an X-ray machine; and

"Whereas dental hygienists need to be able to prescribe X-rays and to be designated as radiation protection officers in order to provide their patients and clients with

safe and convenient access to a medically necessary procedure, as is already the case in many comparable jurisdictions;

"We, the dental hygienists working in Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To express support for the motion filed on April 17, 2012, by the member from Richmond Hill that asks the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to establish a committee consisting of experts to review the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act (1990) and its regulations and make recommendations on how to modernize this act and bring it to 21st century standards, so that it becomes responsive to the safety of patients and clients and the public and to include all forms of radiation that are currently used in the health care sector for diagnostic and therapeutic purposes."

I fully support this petition, and I affix my signature and send it with page Shaumik.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I am petitioning on behalf of my constituents.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario horse racing and breeding industry generates \$2 billion of economic activity, mostly in rural Ontario;

"Whereas more than 60,000 Ontarians are employed by Ontario's horse racing and breeding industry;

"Whereas 20% of the funds generated by the OLG slots-at-racetracks program is reinvested in racetracks and the horse racing and breeding industry, while 75% is returned to the government of Ontario;

"Whereas the OLG slots-at-racetracks program generates \$1.3 billion a year for health care and other spending, making it the most profitable form of gaming in the province for OLG;

"Whereas the government has announced plans to cancel the slots-at-racetracks program, a decision that will cost the government \$1.1 billion per year and threatens more than 60,000 jobs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature as follows:

"Call on the government of Ontario to protect the \$1.1 billion of revenue the government received annually because of the OLG slots-at-racetracks program; direct OLG to honour the contracts with racetracks and protect the horse racing and breeding industry by continuing the OLG slots-at-racetracks revenue-sharing program."

Speaker, I affix my signature in support of the people of eastern Ontario.

DOG OWNERSHIP

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas currently the law takes the onus off of owners that raise violent dogs by making it appear that violence is a matter of genetics; and

"Whereas the Dog Owners' Liability Act does not clearly define a pit bull, nor is it enforced equally across the province, as pit bulls are not an acknowledged breed;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly passes Bill 16, the Public Safety Related to Dogs Statute Law Amendment Act, 2011, into law."

I want to save dogs' lives. A thousand have been killed. I'm going to sign it and give it to page Andrew to be delivered to the table.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas industrial wind turbine developments have raised concerns among citizens over health, safety and property values; and

"Whereas the Green Energy Act allows wind turbine developments to bypass meaningful public input and municipal approvals;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of the Environment revise the Green Energy Act to allow full public input and municipal approvals on all industrial wind farm developments; and

"That the Minister of the Environment conduct a thorough scientific study on the health and environmental impacts of industrial wind turbines."

Thank you, and I will be signing this.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Toby Barrett: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources intends to make significant changes to the Ontario Stewardship Program through the reduction of funding, and more importantly, direct staff support via a stewardship coordinator as currently supplied to stewardship councils since program inception in 1995;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Formally request that Premier McGuinty intervene and ensure that the Ontario Stewardship Program, with their 46 individual MNR stewardship coordinators, remain working on the landscape. It is a value-for-money program that the grassroots taxpayer understands and appreciates. On average, the government's investment is returned at a ratio of better than 5:1, with over 16,000 volunteers implementing 600-plus stewardship projects annually; thereby advancing the government's mandates in a fiscally responsible manner.

"In our view, the stewardship program is, and should continue to be, the bedrock for the delivery of Ontario's biodiversity strategy, 50 Million Tree Program and species-at-risk stewardship, as well as many of the

important legislative initiatives your government has overseen.

"We would therefore respectfully request that you have Minister Gravelle and his management team reconsider the proposed changes to the stewardship program."

I agree with the petition and affix my signature.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. John Yakabuski: A petition for the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario horse racing and breeding industry generates \$2 billion of economic activity, mostly in rural Ontario;

"Whereas more than 60,000 Ontarians are employed by ... horse racing and breeding industry;

"Whereas 20% of the funds generated by the OLG slots-at-racetracks program is reinvested in racetracks and the horse racing and breeding industry, while 75% is returned to the government of Ontario;

"Whereas the OLG slots-at-racetracks program generates \$1.3 billion a year for health care and other spending, making it the most profitable form of gaming in the province for OLG;

"Whereas the government has announced plans to cancel the slots-at-racetracks program, a decision that will cost the government \$1.1 billion per year and threaten more than 60,000 jobs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly ... as follows:

"Call on the government of Ontario to" (1) "protect the \$1.1 billion of revenue the government received annually because of the OLG slots-at-racetracks program;" and (2) "direct OLG to honour the contracts with racetracks and protect the horse racing and breeding industry by continuing the OLG slots-at-racetracks revenue-sharing program."

I support this petition, affix my name and pass it down with the page Vincent.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time we have available for petitions this afternoon. I apologize to members; there's a chance tomorrow.

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ORDERS OF THE DAY

STRONG ACTION FOR ONTARIO ACT (BUDGET MEASURES), 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR UNE ACTION ÉNERGIQUE POUR L'ONTARIO (MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 1, 2012, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 55, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various Acts / Projet de loi 55, Loi

visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter et à modifier diverses lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member for Thornhill.

Mr. Peter Shurman: It's my pleasure to rise in the House today on behalf of the official opposition to begin debate on Bill 55, which is entitled the Strong Action for Ontario Act, subtitled Budget Measures.

Probably pretty well any time I'm putting something on the record that refers to the title of a bill brought by this government, I have to make this remark, and I'm going to make it again: Calling this budget Strong Action for Ontario doesn't necessarily make it so. And I think the bulk of my remarks over the course of the next hour or so will underscore that fact.

Just for the benefit of people who might be watching us who are wondering why we're debating the budget at this point, because there was so much publicity over the last several weeks on the budget motion and whether or not there would be an election and so forth in the province of Ontario, there are two different things here. One is the budget motion, which is where the finance minister moves that we adopt his budget, and that has been dealt with by this Legislature and passed. Now we're into the technical phase of it, and what we're talking about is Bill 55, which is a piece of legislation that, if passed, enables the budget to take place in the province Ontario.

So I thank you for the opportunity to speak to this.

I want to begin by talking about a little bit of my own history in the province of Ontario, because it speaks so much to what my expectations were and, I think, what the expectations of anybody arriving in this province would be. Before coming to Ontario, I was a Quebecer. I was a Montrealer, and I moved here with my then very young family—two young sons; I was a man in my 30s—in 1983, so 29 years ago.

It was kind of like the song New York, New York—you know the line, "If I can make it there, I can make it anywhere." I felt that way about moving from Montreal, which had been besieged by political change. I was moving to Ontario, which, there was no question at that time, was unarguably the engine of Confederation. This was where everything was made. This was where financial service business got done. This was where insurance products were invented. This was where homes were being built and condos were basically rising from the ground up. I thought about the lines from that song, and I wound up moving from Quebec to come and work in a big corporation.

The big corporation lasted a period of time, and I thought it might be appropriate to make the move to small business, because I saw how well my entrepreneur friends were doing. I thought that if they could do it, so could I, and I persevered and did so. I wound up in consulting and probably had the best year I ever had working as a consultant, because by then I had appropriated and assimilated all of this knowledge about how corporations work and then how small business works and I could ad-

wise other people. Indeed, my services were in demand and I got paid handsomely for doing that.

I wound up in media, which many people know. I spent some years on radio as well as running radio stations, and ultimately wound up in this place, dealing with the public good and public administration. That's not necessarily the story of my life; it could be the story of anybody's life. That was Ontario: opportunity for all, opportunity to use what was available to you, based on your experience. Indeed, I was able to do that, and I'm happy to be here today.

I wish I could be standing here to applaud a new way forward for Ontario, because goodness knows, Ontario needs that. I wish I could basically say today that this is a government that has heard the people, that has heeded the call, that has decided that maybe those times I described about what was happening in my life 30 years ago aren't happening to that extent, or maybe not to any extent, anymore. Maybe people have lost some of that hope. Maybe they had believed that. I wish I could be standing here today and saying that, finally, this government is on the road to a balanced budget which would at least in part re-create some of those times. Sadly, Speaker, I cannot stand here and say that any of those things have happened. Instead, I'd like to relate a story about another entrepreneur.

Over the course of the weekend, I spent some time with some people. The gentleman is a guy about my age, also an entrepreneur. He was the very first person to say to me—and he said it this weekend, within half an hour of my getting together with him—the first person to say to me, “Why are you people hurting me?” I said, “How are we hurting you?” He said, “Well, you’ve put a tax on people who make over \$500,000 a year.” I know this guy, and I had no idea until he said that that he made over \$500,000 a year. He said, “I have to pay a tax on that,” and I said, “Cry me a river.” I did. I said, “How bad can it be?” He’s actually the first person who complained about it. But it made me think, on a couple of levels.

I'll get into the nuts and bolts of the budget in a minute, but this very much relates. It made me think of what I had gone through. I never made \$500,000 in a year, but it made me think of a time when I did make \$300,000 or \$400,000 a year—and I did—in private business. It made me think of him making that kind of money now, and it made me think about how you get to that point and what kind of an opportunity base you require in Ontario to get to that point. In my own situation, as with my friends, in small business you risk everything. You roll the dice. He did to get where he is today; I did. I can tell you that his story parallels mine; mine, when I got into small business, was a situation where I had, when I first started my business, about two dozen employees, and by the time I sold it 15 years later, about 125 employees.

There was never an employee of my company, never an employee of my friend's company—never—who failed to get a paycheck every two weeks. I can tell you

that in my own case, as in my friend's, to get down that path to those big dollars, I didn't draw a salary for three years, the initial three years; all I did was write cheques. So it was my money, my family's money, my family's risk being taken that allowed for every single one of those employees to always get paid and never worry about being paid. And, Speaker, I might say that in that Ontario, an Ontario that allowed me that opportunity, not only did I not get paid, I put that money into the company so that other people could get paid, as did my friend; and I changed the light bulbs when they went out and I cleaned the toilets when they got blocked—all of those things that were necessary to make it. I drove from Thornhill to downtown Toronto, where the company was located, when some machine needed resetting. Then, after the three years, when I could take some money out, I took \$7,500 a month, so whatever the math is—I guess that's about \$90,000 a year. I did that for a number of years, and it was only in the last couple of years that I was able to realize some of the rewards that my friends who's making over \$500,000 is now realizing.

When you average that out—and I'm not trying to defend the concept of paying more tax if you make more money. I think that's inherent to the Income Tax Act in Canada, before you get into any specialty taxes. What I'm saying is, no risk, no reward, and if you average out the dollars of people who are making those big bucks, maybe they made \$100,000 a year for their risk. And maybe—maybe—the kind of modification to the legislation that we're considering, which will ultimately come, I'm sure, in amendments, will address the issue, but the fact of the matter is that there's nothing wrong in looking at high incomes and making sure that you do your part and taking them as the pinnacle of something that averaged much less over that year; and there's also something to be said for not pointing fingers at them, because those are the people who do take risks and as a result of those risks create the wealth that Ontario has historically had.

So those are the stories of my life and of my weekend that informed some of the debate that you're going to hear today in terms of Bill 55, the budget bill.

Once the horse trading was completed and the budget motion was passed, it didn't take long for the hammer to fall, did it, Speaker? Like dominoes, rating agencies—objective observers—voice their concerns over any government's direction, and over this government's direction in this particular instance. First, we heard that S&P, Standard and Poor's, had announced its negative outlook for Ontario's financial future. That was within 48 hours of the passing of the budget motion that we heard from S&P.

1400

Amazingly, within 24 hours of that, Moody's actually got on board and didn't just comment but downgraded Ontario's credit rating—all of this within 72 hours of the passing of the budget motion. Jennifer Wong is Moody's assistant vice-president, lead analyst for Ontario, and she stated, “The negative outlook on the province reflects the

softening economic outlook, Ontario's growing debt burden and the extended time frame to achieving a balanced budget." That source is from Moody's Investors Service.

If that isn't a condemning indictment of this government's management, or mismanagement, of our province, I'm not sure that I know what is. People, led basically by the Minister of Finance of the province of Ontario, would like to sweep that away and say it doesn't matter, but it does, because we need independent observers with knowledge to say where we stand, whether we're individuals, whether we're companies, and certainly when we're jurisdictions like the province of Ontario, and that indeed is what S&P and what Moody's did. So the Aa2, which is the grade we've been awarded by Moody's, is not a condemnation of this province to immediate ruin, and a denial of any ability to borrow money, but it is a red flag being run up the flagpole that says, "Down the road a piece, if you don't get your fiscal house in order, you are going to pay," and that's what this is about.

Instead of reassessing their position once their budget had elicited such strong reaction, the McGuinty government persists in stubbornly—and very arrogantly, I might say—leading Ontario astray. They continue to write cheques that they can't cash, and they make promises they don't intend to keep. The Liberal budget resembled nothing of the Liberal election platform. The Strong Action for Ontario Act, as I've said, is anything but strong action.

To aggravate matters as far as my party, the official opposition, is concerned, there was a suggestion by the Premier of this province as well as by his Minister of Finance that for some reason, my party, because it hadn't participated to the level that was expected by that party in some sort of negotiations to modify the budget, somehow or other had forfeited our right to speak. Now, I can't conceive of how that even begins to make sense, but that's what they said. Therefore, if you take that to its ultimate completion, I shouldn't even be standing here and speaking today at all, because somehow or other, through that arrogant government, I have arrived at this point illicitly. I have no dog in the hunt. Why? Because I didn't want to play ball.

The fact of the matter is, and it should be noted for the record, that we did participate at the table with the Minister of Finance, going back to November and again as late as February, but there was nothing meaningful about it, because there was no suggestion put forward by this side of the House, put forward by the official opposition, that was of any interest to that finance minister or that Premier in terms of incorporation into the budget.

So I say that, illicit or not on the part of that government, here I stand on behalf of Tim Hudak and the official opposition.

Bill 55, the budget bill, is a huge bill. It looks not unlike the Toronto phone book—about that thick. It contains 69 different schedules. What that means, to the uninitiated, is that it modifies 69 different pieces of legislation in order to enable the legislation that it itself

represents, in order to enable that budget to be of force and effect.

Interestingly—and I took a look over the weekend at this book. This is not a prop but, rather, a budget addendum called Addendum to the 2012 Ontario Budget: Report on Expense Management Measures. If you take a look at any given page, essentially what you're reading is gobbledygook, because what it tries to do is talk about where the dollars are derived that are going to be saved so that we can have this "strong action."

So I picked one, Ministry of Children and Youth Services, where they look at saving \$16 million this year, \$16.2 million next year and \$16.2 million the year after that. That takes us to a scheduled election year, 2015, for a total savings of \$48.4 million.

I'm just going to read a highlighted portion; it's a paragraph long. Follow along with me—I'm talking about you legislators here in the House as well as people at home—and see if you can understand this.

"Building on transformation to date, the government is working with children's aid societies and the Commission to Promote Sustainable Child Welfare. The goal of this work is to find creative solutions to further improve the delivery of services to protect children, while containing costs through agency amalgamations; back-office consolidations; shared service delivery; developing a new funding model; establishing new approaches to accountability and outcome management; and improving service and financial management through implementation of the child protection information network.

"This transformation will support children's aid societies as they manage costs while continuing to provide services that protect children."

That's what it says; that's all it says. That equals \$48 million. And I'm sure that, somewhere, somebody with papers and pens and spreadsheets can show me that that is true. But for me to read that, and I'm fairly savvy with this stuff, it doesn't say anything.

Here's what I know about children's aid: If I go back a scant two years, this same government was not only unwilling to raise the children's aid budget in York region, where I represent Thornhill; it wanted to lower it. Only by a huge effort on the part of myself and my colleagues from York-Simcoe and from Newmarket-Aurora could we get the same allocation maintained, and now they're talking about cutting \$48 million in administrative expenses from the ministry that will somehow or other enhance children's aid societies. So I think there's a disconnect here.

This is the largest budget that I've seen in my time in this Legislature, in every single way. Unfortunately, quantity doesn't necessarily mean quality, and this budget is ample proof of that. Ontario is leading Confederation in ways that I would prefer it not lead. It's leading Confederation in debt level. It is leading in deficit level. The deficit in this year, projected in this budget, is three times the deficit of every other province and territory in Confederation combined. We are a province that represents 40% of the population of Canada, but

our deficit somehow or other has come to a sum that is three times the deficit of all other provinces combined.

Unemployment is another yardstick that has to be comprehended, has to be considered, in looking at the success or failure of any government. We're now in month 63. We'll find out, if we get to month 64 next week, when Alex Trebek—no, never mind. I don't mean to demean this by making it like a quiz show, but it almost is. It's "pull the card away and find out what happens." Sixty-three straight months as Canada's leader in unemployment: That's Ontario.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: "What is globalization?"

Mr. Peter Shurman: I didn't hear your question, but it's 63 months.

This is a budget that falls short on every level. That's the point, Speaker. It falls short on every level. I am quite certain of my position and that of my leader, Tim Hudak, when the PC caucus stands and unanimously and unequivocally will vote no to this lacklustre budget bill that is closer to a collection of fantasies than it is to any sort of economic road map.

I want to say again, reiterate, the fact that this no vote and the no vote that preceded it when we considered the budget motion was, contrary to suggestions from others, absolutely considered and carefully considered. We are a party that puts above all else two aspects of life in a jurisdiction, life in the province of Ontario. One is that you have to live within your means, and the other is that you have to keep people employed. So when we talk about the fact that there is no jobs policy—and I'll deal with that more fully later on in this talk—we're serious. We're not talking about the creation of a blue ribbon task force or panel that says, "Someday, sometime, we'll report to you on how you make jobs." We're talking about making jobs. We're talking about a serious set of measures which this government has had many, many years to consider and to implement that would actually create jobs.

1410

We're also talking about spending. We've talked about spending ever since we were a party, and they've talked about spending and they've been actively involved in spending ever since they were in government. The bottom line on this is, if we take a look at revenue and we take a look at expenses in the province of Ontario, every single year that they've been in power—and it's eight and a half years now—there has been a revenue increase. Even in that horrible bottoming out that we experienced over 2008-09—which, admittedly, was a worldwide phenomenon aggravated by a negative situation in the province of Ontario—we still, in the province of Ontario, increased our revenue, year on year, in that year. We've had revenue shortfalls; we've never had a revenue diminution. We've never gone down, year on year, ever in the province of Ontario. So do we have a revenue problem? I suggest, Speaker, that we do not; we have a spending problem.

Speaker, this government has failed this House. More importantly, it has failed the people of Ontario, and we deserve so much better.

I want to talk about government action and the budget measures themselves.

We live in a great province. Let no one ever say that this party, in debate, when we talk about the government, is somehow or other transposing for "government" the term "province." Our province has always been a great province, it remains a great province, and it is a province that I would say, Speaker, based on everything I know about the 107 people from all parties who attend at this House, we all love and we all put all of our efforts into. This is a province that is dedicated to hard work. It is dedicated to honest living. It is a province where anyone from any walk of life can make a living for himself or herself the way I described that I did when I arrived here. This is the common perception that Ontarians have held.

I would take it a step beyond that, Speaker. I would say that for me, it has always been and remains an honour to be an Ontarian, and I think everybody feels that way. But this government's mismanagement of our economy at a time when what Ontario needed was leadership has shaken these foundations and shaken them very seriously to a point where—and I think we all know this; this is not a Progressive Conservative outlook, this is reportable—we have people leaving this province, people who came here to make their fortunes, to build their lives, to work with their families, to have a future, to make a life, who have decided that maybe they can make a life better in Alberta or maybe they can make a life better in British Columbia. Maybe they can. Maybe this has to fall on the doorstep of this government. This government has systemically hindered Ontario's ability to grow.

The province that was Canada's economic engine, as I referred to it earlier, is, after eight years of Dalton McGuinty, struggling even as our neighbours succeed. This is what I find so disheartening. To talk to people in other provinces who are having an easier time of it, to look at unemployment rates like 5% to 6% in our next-door neighbour Manitoba or over in Saskatchewan, while we sit there up in the sevens moving towards the eights—why is that? The Liberals refuse to change course, notwithstanding the protestations of ourselves and other groups.

We've talked to a great extent about the possibility of dealing with getting our house in order through a number of measures, probably the chief one of which was mentioned even today in question period, and that is the idea of a mandatory wage freeze in the broader public sector. The Ontario PC caucus has been calling on the government for months to look seriously into controlling the ballooning overdraft in the government chequing account. As a matter of fact, it's worth noting that in the very first meeting that I had, that was unproductive, with the finance minister in the pre-budget period—dealt with, amongst other subjects, this concept of a wage freeze. I was given a fairly learned lesson by Mr. Duncan on why this was not possible: the fact that it had been tried, that there was a British Columbia case that had gone before the Supreme Court. We went to the trouble of getting

legal opinions that said, to the contrary, we could do this and still can. But this government wasn't going to do it. This would have been effectively addressed if the government had taken decisive action and legislated a wage freeze for all public and broader public sector workers.

It's interesting that even as recently as four hours ago, there was the Premier standing in response to questions from my leader, Tim Hudak, saying, "No, we're not prepared to get into the business of a public sector wage freeze." I think the difference at this point between that Premier's position and the position of my party leader, and my party generally, is fairly narrow. We say what we mean, we mean what we say, and then we follow through and we do it.

At the end of the day, this Premier is saying, "We believe that we have a working relationship, that we spent years building, between ourselves and the broader public sector, and we can resolve it through what will wind up being a friendly round of negotiations." But I'm looking at the papers every day and I don't see anything friendly about this round of negotiations. In fact, I see a spectre of something to come that I'm not liking. I would say that even the unions involved, the groups involved, the associations involved in these negotiations would have respected, and still would, the position that my party has taken to a much greater extent, because at least they understand where they are in all of this.

If I say to you that a mandatory, legislated public sector wage freeze is what we propose for the next two years to even the playing field, then you understand exactly what it is we mean. Instead, we look at this dance—I wouldn't call it a mating dance, just a dance—between the province of Ontario and its various partners in the broader public sector these days, and I see it leading to much the same thing as what we're proposing. I take no great pleasure in talking about this from an I-told-you-so perspective, but that's what I see. Why don't you just do what you really mean to do at the end of the day? They can't afford to pay any more money; they haven't allocated any more money in this budget for the next two years. Therefore, we're talking about a wage freeze. Let's call it what it's going to be: a mandatory, legislated public sector wage freeze. But, no, I still hear the waffling on that side. Frankly, I find that offensive, and I think the people of Ontario should be offended by it as well.

During the recent recession, families and businesses all took a hit, a big hit, and I would like to point out very particularly, in the elderly part of our population probably more so than most. Why? Because if you were a person of—let's take a mean age of 70 in 2006 or 2007, and you wound up in the thick of that recession and found that the mutual funds you'd bought with your RRSP, that you'd turned into an annuity that was now paying you; or the savings that you had put in a bank account; or the equities that you'd bought on the stock market—whatever your instrument of savings happened to be, they took a hit too. So the dividend income or the interest income or the RRIF income—however you

derived your monthly living expenses—suddenly had to drop because of the hit that the nest egg took. It never recovered. That's not true for a 30-year-old, a 40-year-old, a 50-year-old or even for me in my early 60s, because I'm still working and I'm still earning a living and I can afford the time horizon that it takes for some of my savings to recover. Those people never recovered. So, a big hit? Nowhere more so than that. Everybody took one.

Ontarians and Ontario businesses recognize the need to tighten their belts. They get it. This is during a time of recession. Why does this government refuse to accept that same premise? Why is that? I have gone through numerous pre-budget submissions that asked for that very thing. I might also make this comment, Speaker: Pre-budget submissions were as scarce as hen's teeth. They were hard to come by, and there's a reason for that. That was because at the time that we ordinarily would have gone around the province with the standing committee on finance, looking for submissions from groups and individuals to say what was on their minds with regard to what the budget should contain, there were no pre-budget hearings, because the government stonewalled the opposition parties and didn't allow for the creation of that committee before the fact of this budget being presented.

In discussing this, the parliamentary assistant for finance and the finance minister himself talked about the fact that they had consulted extensively with people, using teleconferencing and doing direct consultations.

1420

But do you know what? That was consultation by the Liberal government directly with people. It was teleconferencing directly with people and interpreting whatever it got to its own ends, ostensibly informing the budget that way, without having any information coming from questions that might have been asked that would expose information; those questions to be asked by members of the third party and members of my party. We never had that opportunity.

So if this budget was informed at all by teleconferencing calls or meetings or some kind of pre-budget submissions that were invited directly by the Liberal Party and its finance minister, so be it. But there's no evidence of that for me; there's no evidence of that for the public to see. So it's not enough just to say it was done. It has to be seen to have been done.

I've gone through numerous pre-budget submissions that were directed to me, specifically, that came to my office. They asked for belt-tightening; they asked for strong measures. Interesting again that this bill talks about strong budget measures when, indeed, we don't consider them to be strong at all, because at the rate at which this government is spending, Ontario does not stand a chance of digging itself out of the hole that only the Liberal Party—only the Liberal government of Dalton McGuinty—has dug. He's the person—he's not holding the smoking gun; in this case, he's holding the spade, the shovel that dug us into this inextricable hole that, if it ever gets filled in, will be filled in by my grandkids and my great-grandchildren.

While Ontarians have dealt with layoffs, lower pay and anxiety about their future, the broader public sector has been out there expecting, and still expecting, that it's privileged position—because, let's face it, folks, while they are good people and work hard, they are the new elite, because we can't move at the level they've been able to move at financially over the course of the past eight years. In other words, the people who sacrificed and made tough decisions are the same people paying the salaries of those working in the public sector, a sector that accounts for the largest portion of this province's expenses: \$55 billion in the last year.

There's something wrong with a situation where hard-working families who have been hit by unemployment, wage cuts, salary freezes, shift reductions and so forth are expected to support a public sector that, as a result of Dalton McGuinty's lack of leadership, hasn't been reined in to do the same in these turbulent times.

We often quote a figure of 27% from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, being roughly the percentage difference, in favour of the broader public sector, of salary levels right now versus similar jobs in the private sector; 27% as a result of the fact that basically this government has gone along with, I think, bloated requests over the course of the period of time it's been in power. And now, when there's an expectation on the part of the broader public sector that this should continue and it can't continue, the government, if not indeed at risk of being at loggerheads with the broader public sector, may even be said to be at loggerheads already.

That's why we've been very explicit. That's why we've called for a broader public sector wage freeze from the outset, right after the election in October. That's why we still take that position today, Speaker, and frankly, that's one of the main reasons why, at the end of the day, we couldn't sit hand in hand around a table and sing Kumbaya with the Liberal government and say, "Your budget's okay," because the budget's not okay.

The budget is a budget that pretends to be a belt-tightening budget, where belt-tightening is defined as spending only \$2 billion more this year than we did last year. This is the only administration I can conceive of, the only people I can conceive of saying, "We're going to bump things up, but it's by such a lesser amount than we have in past years that we'll call this austerity." So they're spending \$125 billion to \$130 billion and they're only going to bump it up by \$2 billion, and this is belt-tightening. Why? Because every single year in the past eight years they spent 7% or 7.5% more than they did in the prior year, and that makes them better people.

I have two problems with that. One, spending \$2 billion more at a time like this is not belt-tightening. That's the first problem I've got. The second problem is that you have actually spent so much over that period of time that you've doubled the provincial debt from what it was in 2003 until now. You've managed to double the amount of debt of the province of Ontario—all the debt that was scored from Confederation right up to 2003. I find that inconceivable. But that's the Liberal way, the

Liberal way that refuses to acknowledge and accept a link between cause and effect, action and consequence. All actions carry consequences.

The Liberal way is incapable of distinguishing between needs and wants. When I talk to lay people—when I'm speaking about the budget outside—I often refer to the column marked "needs" and the column marked "wants," because people understand it this way. Budgets for provinces are not any different than budgets for people; not any different than budgets for businesses. The easiest way to say it is that it's just more zeros. So if your budget in your home is \$100,000, add three more zeros and that makes it a million dollars, add three more zeros and that makes it a billion dollars, and add three more zeros and that makes it a trillion dollars. It doesn't make any difference, it's still an amount of money and you have to parse how you spend different aspects of it.

In most people's businesses and most people's homes—and it should be this way in people's governments—there's a column marked "needs" and a column marked "wants." Let's take it on the simplest level. In my home, my needs column is my rent or my mortgage, my heating and electricity costs, my food, whatever supplies the kids need, clothing and stuff. Those are needs. They're not discussible; they're needs. We have to attend to them. Then there are wants. If I've saved well or I got a bonus from the boss or I've been careful about my needs, I might get to take the kids to Florida in December. That's how most people think, and that's the wants column.

With government, the needs column is that we have to provide for people's health—all their health care—we have to provide for education for our kids and we have to provide social services for the community. All those things that nobody would fail to acknowledge, we certainly acknowledge as well. But they go into the wants column to a great extent.

I could go into a fairly substantial discussion of the Drummond report, because Mr. Drummond dealt fairly well with a series of things that could be described as needs and a series of things that could be described as wants. But I will go into the Drummond report to this extent: It's been said in this House before, and I'm going to say it again because it's worthy of repetition, that the Drummond report was not about a series of needs and a series of wants; it was about a recipe, a recipe not unlike what you'd use in baking something. If you add enough of this and subtract enough of that, mix this together and you'll have an outcome. That outcome might be palatable.

The Drummond report recipe said, "Here are 362 ingredients"—he called them recommendations; I'll call them ingredients in the recipe. "If you mix all these ingredients together, you will get to a balanced budget by 2017-18"—a very laudable goal. "You don't have to follow the recipe. You can do substitutions. If you substitute, that means you can take something out of the recipe as long as you put something else back in." The suggestion at the time the Drummond report was brought into this House, which was nothing more than a delay

tactic, was that somehow or other my party said, "You have to adopt all 362 recommendations."

"We can't. We're going to be good guys. We're going to leave that. We're going to leave that. We'll take that out. We'll cherry-pick it."

We never said that. What we said was, follow the recipe. If you really do want full-day kindergarten, that's fine, but Drummond said, "You can't have full-day kindergarten, so you're going to have to put something else on the table that addresses the fact that you're going to spend \$1.5 billion or \$2 billion that I told you to take out." They didn't do it. That's the problem with this government.

I'm bringing it back to this simplicity: They decided that they wanted to maintain something that was in the wants column as opposed to the needs column because they defined it as a need. Okay, fair enough. But you have to pay for it, and they didn't. That's why we have a budget called "strong measures" that isn't strong. That's why we have a budget that, notwithstanding what the title represents, spends \$2 billion more than was spent last year and carries a title that suggests that somehow or other this government has become austere. But I said that's the Liberal way, which is incapable of distinguishing between needs and wants; the Liberal way, which is fundamentally incapable—incapable—of living on a budget, of living within its means.

Speaker, we weren't the only ones calling on the government to hit the brakes on its spending and take action on skyrocketing public sector wages. The CFIB recommended that public sector compensation levels must be kept in line with private sector norms. They noted that, "There is a need to review the spending and compensation practices of the public sector to reduce the cost to taxpayers, reduce provincial debt and encourage future cost efficiency to avoid future deficits." Sounds pretty good to me, and I think it sounds pretty good to most people. It is, after all, what we ask families to do. It is, after all, what we ask businesses to do. Is it not fair that we should ask the government to do it?

1430

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce, which represents over 60,000 businesses, also called for a long-term public sector compensation restraint strategy. How many organizations do you need to hear from before you start to agree with common sense? All that Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC caucus have asked for from this government is to treat everyone equally and to show taxpayers the respect that they deserve.

Contrary to what the CUPE president has said, Ontario doesn't have a revenue problem—I've mentioned this earlier; it has a spending problem. It has never had a revenue problem. We on this side of the House recognize that unless this government addresses its spending problem, the things that we truly need, the things that we truly value, like our health care, like our education, will continue to be at risk. That's what needs and wants are. We have those needs; they're addressing wants. That puts the needs in jeopardy. We recognize that the McGuinity

approach will leave us without the legacy that we, as Ontarians, are proud of, for our children, for our grandchildren and, yes, even for our great-grandchildren. That's why we think it is fair and we think it is reasonable to ask government workers to forgo a raise.

Let me say that in this Legislature, our money is where our mouth is. Unbeknownst to many people who might be watching us on the legislative channel today, all MPPs in this House have been on a mandatory wage freeze for the past three years. No complaints; the fact of the matter is, our wages were frozen three years ago. That's just the way it is. It was because we were what's called low-hanging fruit. It was easy for the Premier to say, "You're not unionized, and by the way, everybody else who isn't unionized and works for the government of Ontario will undergo a wage freeze," so they did. But they won't do it with their unions, the broader public sector. This government chooses to pander to its Liberal union friends who so generously helped fund the Liberal campaign in the last election and the one before that, and I'm referring to the Working Families Coalition. These people are fair-weather friends. To somewhat illustrate this, people have been watching television, listening to radio and reading the newspaper recently, and they've heard the name Sam Hammond—not a bad guy; head of the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario and the first person to say, "I'm not going to have any of this." I don't think it took him an hour to walk out of negotiations with the Ministry of Education, saying that he wasn't going to tolerate any of this.

I think it's worth noting that Mr. Hammond has been at the forefront of the Working Families Coalition. I saw him here on budget day and chatted with him out in the foyer after Finance Minister Duncan read his budget speech. I said, "Well, Sam, what do you think?" He said, "Hah. At least with you, I know where I stand." That's the point that I made earlier, Speaker. We might not get along in terms of seeing eye to eye on compensation for elementary teachers or the broader public sector in general, but we do say what we mean and we do mean what we say. What they're getting over there—I'm talking about their friends the elementary teachers or the doctors or anybody else that fits into the broader public sector—is mealy-mouthed, two-faced approaches to how they're going to be compensated because they're trying to, on the one hand, balance the fact that that was where they got about \$9 million of support in advertising during the last election with the fact that they now can no longer afford to take care of them. That's what it is.

Job creation is the other aspect of this budget that goes so wanting. It's no secret to anyone who has read the budget that the McGuinity government has utterly failed to tackle what we have described, I think, accurately on this side of the House as a jobs crisis. It is a crisis when you have close to 600,000 people who want to work not capable of working because this government has not put the appropriate measures in place, taken the appropriate actions to see to it that any able-bodied person or, for that matter, people who aren't necessarily able-bodied but are

fit to work in some capacity—has not put the proper things in place to see to that exigency. That's a jobs crisis. The budget's so-called jobs creation council is just another government creation, another tactic like Drummond, a PR ploy that Ontario doesn't need. Ontario needs real action. Ontario doesn't need any more studies, it doesn't need any more conversations, it doesn't need any more words, and it doesn't need any more delays.

We've been down that road so many times—one too many times, I would say, Speaker. We have seen this page from the Liberal playbook so often: Create a board; create a study; create a commission; create a panel, blue ribbon or otherwise; give them some period of time, three, six, 12 months, whatever it takes—"Now we don't have to talk about it anymore because the work is being done." That's the way it's done on the other side. Then the big day comes, and it's revealed and it's talked about in the popular media for about 48 hours, and then it goes on a shelf, never to be seen or heard from again. We've had the studies. We've had to pay for the economists. We've had to read and listen to their reports, the reports that the McGuinty government never had any intention of implementing. And you know what? On this side of the House—and maybe this also speaks to our attitude with regard to "Let's play nice"—we're done. We're just done with it. We can't listen to any more of it because it's nonsense. Ontario needs real action.

Mr. Bill Walker: Real change.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Real change, as my friend says.

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce noted in their pre-budget submissions that to stimulate the economy and job growth, this government must reduce the regulatory burden on businesses, harmonize federal and provincial regulations, ensure future sustainability of the WSIB program by making it more fair for those who actually create jobs—guess what? They're going to do that. How are they going to do that? Well, they took a Progressive Conservative to head up the WSIB, and I bet you the unfunded liability will be addressed.

"Ontario can be competitive again if the government lessens the tax burden on small businesses." That's another quote from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. I'm going to read it again. "Ontario can be competitive again if the government lessens the tax burden on small businesses." It's true. We take a look at other jurisdictions—I'll get to that in a moment—and there are better places to locate a small business if you don't want to address this market or your business doesn't need to address a particular market because maybe you provide a service that can be bought anywhere. Maybe you sell over the Internet.

Ontario needs to offer the right conditions so that companies looking for new locations will choose us as their new home. Instead, policies that this government has enacted have hurt Ontario businesses, and all of us from all sides of the House know people who will tell us that.

The McGuinty government's energy policy makes it nearly impossible for businesses to operate in the prov-

ince. I participated in the debates—this must be three-plus years ago—over the Green Energy Act, at the time listening to questions being asked from our side or even participating in question period and asking then-Energy minister Smitherman what the ramifications were going to be, cost-wise, of the Green Energy Act on individuals and on businesses. The answer was, "Oh, I can't see it being more than 1% to 1.5%." I'll never forget that.

How many people—and I'm just asking this rhetorically. Think about this, Liberals, think about this, NDP, and think about this, fellow Conservatives. How many people who are either in the home environment or in businesses are asking you, "What's wrong with my energy bill?"

It's insane. How many of you have been asked about the global adjustment—the global adjustment that basically is such a huge number that it doesn't just threaten to put businesses under; it's putting businesses under. Brian Weller of Richmond Hill writes, "Monthly electricity consumption means that generation costs have increased 35%, from roughly \$110,000 in January to \$150,000 in April, for one Ontario employer in our group." Hey, this is serious money, and this is serious money that doesn't come close to 1% to 1.5%.

This government made a decision to get into a high-tech, kind of sexy approach to energy through renewables by licensing people through a feed-in tariff program to build substantial, or sometimes less substantial, wind installations and solar installations. We said then and we say now, "Nothing wrong with wind, nothing wrong with solar, but you got it wrong." You got it wrong because what you're doing is you're paying a ton of money for electricity that you can't store. Now you're creating more electricity than you need, partly because you licensed too many of them and partly because you've destroyed the economy so much that we don't need that much energy, and you're having to sell this excess energy, give it away, pay people to take it. So we're spending millions and millions and millions of dollars. You've got to get that back, because those are millions in government money that are going out the door and they have to be replaced. "The present government has totally mismanaged the electricity supply and demand." This is a quoted addendum to what my writer from Richmond Hill has to say.

Ontario is home to one of the largest R&D sectors in the country—Silicon Valley North, if you will—in the Kitchener-Waterloo-Cambridge corridor. There's a large bioscience sector in Markham, part of my own riding. We have great potential as a province.

I might relate a story. As some people will be aware, and it's no secret, our party has a jobs creation task force. We think, absent one on that side, we should have created one. We've been working fairly diligently for the last six months; we should have an interim report out pretty soon. We've had a lot of submissions from a lot of very interesting people who come from every aspect of Ontario life, be it academia, large corporate, small business, mining, forestry, whatever.

We talked to a particular person who represented research and development, R&D. This fellow was part of

a company that was the recipient of a fairly substantial, I'll call it a corporate welfare grant, for R&D. One of my colleagues said, "Did you need the grant? Was it at all instrumental in you locating your R&D here in the province of Ontario?"

He said, "No." They didn't apply.

"Why did you take it?"

"Well, because they gave it. We weren't going to turn it down."

"Would you have located your company in the province of Ontario if you hadn't bought another company that was already in the province of Ontario?"

Answer: "No way in hell."

That's pretty damning, as far as I'm concerned. On the one hand, I'm really glad they're here. On the other hand, I don't want to hear answers like that. It speaks to how this government manages our money, all in aid of being able to say that it has spent money on R&D or has somehow or other been instrumental in creating jobs. It's just not so.

Dalton McGuinty is at the helm. Ontario is systematically being undercut by its own government, a government that likes to pick winners and losers, rather than creating conditions in which businesses can thrive and letting the private sector do what it does best, which is do business.

Private sector people, especially small business people such as the one I used to be, are not that great at filling in forms, mostly because we don't have the time, and we have to recognize that, on the part of the people who are running those small businesses. If that's the case, you have to eliminate the paperwork; you have to make it easier; you have to get the roadblocks out of the way; and you have to let them go do what it is they do, which is mostly selling. When you sell, you bring in revenue. When you bring in revenue, you hire people. Those people pay taxes. Presto, you don't have 600,000 people unemployed anymore. It isn't quite that simple, but essentially that's the chain of events.

Despite their efforts to convince us to the contrary, we know that this budget will be the province's undoing. In fact, we have had ample proof, and I have already offered that proof by way of citing what happened within 72 hours of the adoption of the budget motion, and that was the downgrade by S&P and Moody's, the actual lowering of the credit rating of the province of Ontario.

Ever since the Liberal Party has taken power in the province of Ontario, it has been systematically reducing the growth potential, undermining our economic future, threatening our fiscal liquidity. The raw facts are that our debt stands at \$250 billion. It is projected by economist Don Drummond—not my economist; their economist—to be \$411 billion looming in 2017-18. That's five years down the road, Speaker. This is not soothsaying; this is projectable by an economist of great repute. The deficit this year: about \$15 billion; projected deficit by 2017-18: \$30 billion.

Have I told you about the underground economy? I'm going to tell you about the underground economy. A

couple of weeks ago, during the last recess of this House, I travelled to various ridings and did economic round tables with people who were in various aspects of business and the professions, and I'll tell you a story that came directly out of—actually, it was Richmond Hill again, but it was an amalgam of people from Richmond Hill, Oak Ridges-Markham, Thornhill; that area of York region.

Very particularly, one fellow said, "I used one of the major job engines"—I guess it was Monster or one of those—"and I advertised for several positions I had. They were entry-level positions and paid about \$14, \$15, \$16 an hour. Inside of the first hour that I was up on the site, I had 180 resumé submitted to me by email"—180 within an hour. "There was one thing in common to all 180 resumé, and it was a cover letter, and you know what the cover letter asked? 'I'll take the job if the job is still available, but I want the money in cash.'" One hundred and eighty out of 180 wanted the money in cash. I said, "Are you telling me that you particularly or somehow in general there's an underground economy where people are asking to be paid in cash to avoid all of the additional knockoffs that you get on the pay stub?" He said, "No; that's everywhere."

Then another fellow at the table piped up and said that there's a particular element of the restaurant industry—I won't, for the purposes of the Hansard record, say which element it is, but a substantial number of like-type of restaurants in the greater Toronto area where, very typically, the wait staff is hired at \$5 an hour cash, no tips; \$5 an hour cash, no tips; right now, people across the mainstream in Toronto. Why? Because people are desperate and they'll take it, and they'll take it specifically if it's in cash.

Our consumer price index, since this government's assumption of power, is a lesson in itself in fiscal mismanagement. If you take the 2002 dollar at 100 cents, in 2007 you needed to spend \$1.10.8 to get the same value. In 2008, it was \$1.13. In 2009, it was \$1.14. In 2010, it was \$1.16, and last year, in 2011, that dollar's worth of goods and services you bought in 2002, you had to pay \$1.20 for. God knows what it is this year with gas.

Under Dalton McGuinty, Ontarians have been taxed more, and it is becoming harder to afford the must-haves versus the wants, as per what I was talking about earlier.

In one local business survey, 95% of respondents said that they were very, very concerned about the provincial debt, and 82% said that the McGuinty government is on the wrong track and it's small wonder, Speaker. It seems like whenever Ontarians look to attain new heights, they can count on the government to muddy the waters with regulatory burdens, with red tape.

Do you know that red tape in the province of Ontario versus the province of British Columbia is about 2 to 1—about one regulation over there for every two we have? It's no wonder that they're doing so well and we're not doing as well as our potential says we should be.

This government is missing in action when there's a need for a vision, when there's a need for bold action, for a plan to make Ontario what it could be.

A couple of examples before my time runs out on the education front: the College Student Alliance is calling for a system to streamline the academic credit transfer process and move towards 100% credit recognition for students transferring between similar programs. We got that.

In this particular case, I can name the person who came to see our job creation task force, and you know his name: Rick Miner. Dr. Miner used to be president of Seneca College; now he's a private consultant. Basically, he talks about the fact that we have to make a lot of moves in academia to keep our province at the forefront and to keep being able to address the new jobs that are coming on stream. One of the main things he talks about is credit transferability, so that a Ryerson credit equals a U of T credit equals a York credit equals a UOIT credit, whatever it happens to be, so that young people can mix and match and come up with the new professions and the new combinations that are required. This would not only allow for greater movement within our post-secondary institutions but also encourage further study and growth in affected industries.

1450

Speaker, I see that my time is running out. I could probably do another hour, but I won't—some people will say thankfully. What I would like to do is finish the way I began and recall for members and recall for those watching the fact that Bill 55 is entitled the Strong Action for Ontario Act. Strong action means that you actually take measures that result in the change that is absolutely essential, and the change that's essential now in Ontario is jobs and curtailment of spending.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I thank the member from Thornhill for his comments. One of the comments he made when he started his speech off was that he talked about his friend who made \$500,000 and was complaining about the 2%. I found that very fascinating, because I remember when I started work in the early 1970s at Stelco, the ratio between a CEO and a working person on the floor was maybe seven or eight to one in their salaries. That ratio now, varying on different positions, could go to 30 or 40 to one, and that's where this government has fallen down, because of the ratios that people make in different jobs and in positions of CEOs.

You know, it's interesting that the member did not mention about sharing the pain. Well, you know, people who are making that kind of money—I don't know too many who are making \$500,000—use all the same facilities that we use in this province: hospitals and all the other necessities. They would probably be complaining if those things weren't there; whether they want to help contribute to it is another story. And the \$500,000 person can certainly write off a lot of his costs on—he'll find a tax shelter or some way to worry about the \$10,000 he's going to lose on his \$500,000. He'll find a way to take care of that and won't even feel the pain.

If you want to look at sharing the pain, you might want to look down in the States at Bill Gates and Warren

Buffet. These guys are billionaires, and they were willing to give away half their fortune because they couldn't possibly spend it in their lifetime, and they wanted to help society and give money back. These guys are philanthropists with a heart. Maybe some of the people in this country who are making that kind of money should have a heart.

The bottom line is that Warren Buffet pays less of a per cent of what he earns than his secretary. So the ratios are wrong. The tax system is wrong. It has got to be set up—if you want to be fair, you've got to be fair. This government didn't go far enough. I wouldn't have started at \$500,000; I would have started at \$300,000. You would have had a lot more money in the budget. I can't spend that much money in a year, \$300,000. I would never even dream to make that in a year. I think the Premier makes \$212,000, and he has a \$105-billion budget.

You've got to ask yourself some questions. Where is this member coming from?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I'm pleased to be able to respond to the member from Thornhill about the budget.

There's no question that we have very significant restraints that we have to deal with. We've put forward a budget that speaks to job creation, job creation, job creation, while at the same time protecting two major components, and that is health and education. You cannot have job creation without a very highly skilled workforce, so we have invested in our universities, our colleges and our training institutions. We have the new career centre that's continuing to flourish, where people have changed their careers and are now getting into new careers. We enabled them to do that by providing the necessary funds as they go through one or two years of additional schooling.

But I also think it's important to recognize that there are a great many people in our society who do, in fact, earn significant dollars who are also very generous with those dollars. I think it's dismissive to suggest that because you have a great deal of money, you're not necessarily prone to giving back into society. I give you a good example of Wallace McCain and the Honourable Margaret Norrie McCain, who virtually gave away most of their fortune, when Wallace had passed away, to universities, to colleges, to training as well as to the arts and the theatre institutions and continue to support. So there are people who do have a big heart as well as big wallets. I just wanted to make that comment.

I think the other thing that we need to remember is that we have to work together to find the resolutions in order to continue to move this province forward. It's not going to be easy as we deal with the challenges facing us. We are looking to a two-year wage freeze for our teachers, our physicians, for our public sector workers. So we know that as we do this, it will take all of us in this House to work together to ensure that we have a future, and that's a future for our children.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's my pleasure to rise and bring comment on behalf of the great words that were given by our finance minister, the member from Thornhill, Mr. Shurman.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I'm not a minister, yet.

Mr. Bill Walker: Sorry. Maybe that was a Freudian slip. I apologize, Speaker.

In any case, he is a gentleman who takes his job very responsibly. He brings a very pragmatic approach in his address. He referenced needs versus wants. We all need to do that, Speaker. Every single one of us cannot spend beyond our means.

He talked about reduced spending, and yet, this government in their austerity budget have 14 of 24 ministries getting an increase. How can you do that, when you're spending \$15 billion more a year? We need to live within our means.

He talked about jobs. Everyone needs a job to have a sense of self-worth. There's nothing better than getting up in the morning and saying, "I'm going to a job I'm proud of. I'm part of society. I'm giving my share." Yet there are 600,000 people unemployed, and we're going down tracks that are trying to bring industry like the renewables that just factually aren't creating those jobs. We're losing four jobs for every one created. We can't go there.

He referenced debt and deficit, a \$15-billion deficit that's going to go to \$30 billion, a debt that's \$235 billion, more than all of the years of Confederation. We have now done in eight years—they have now done—the Liberals have doubled that debt, and it will be \$411 billion. We're leaving these great pages that serve us every day and our kids and grandkids in a hole that they couldn't dig out of if they have to, if we don't take drastic decisions.

Leadership is about making the responsible decisions. We need, as a government, to stand in front of the people of Ontario and do the thing that's needed to get this economy and this province back to being the leader of Confederation. We need to reduce spending. We need a jobs plan and an action plan, as Mr. Shurman so eloquently said. It's not about talking, it's about doing, and we need to do that and we need to reduce the debt and the deficit. This budget did not, and that's why we, as a party, are very strong in our commitment and our discipline to say no, we cannot support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jonah Schein: I listened closely to the member from Thornhill and listened for some new ideas, and instead I heard much of the same old ideas that we hear over and over again in this city, in this province. They're ideas that are actually shared by the government, I believe. I have real concerns about the budget bill, about a continuing trend towards privatization, towards deregulation.

Everybody expresses concern for our children and our grandchildren. When I have children and grandchildren, I

want to make sure that they have clean air to breathe; I want to make sure that they have a public education system, that they have child care.

It sounds sometimes in this House like we're reading straight out of 1984, that George Orwell is here speaking, because of the doublespeak in this House. You know, to talk about people who work as civil servants as the elite of Ontario is absurd. People who work every day to bring public services to this province are the heroes of this province, and if we really care about workers, if we care about fairness, we need to be bringing people up to decent standards of work.

It's bizarre, again, to hear about the deep concern for somebody who earns \$500,000 and is being hurt in this province. I have yet to meet anybody in my riding of Davenport who earns \$500,000. I have met people who are struggling to put their child in child care, people who want to go to work but they don't have a daycare space. I was sent here to make sure that people who don't have a voice do have a voice in this province. I think that the people who earn \$500,000 do have a strong voice. They have access to good legal consults; they have access to the best accountants in this province. But we need to make sure that we're fighting for people who don't have that.

I think that the government is headed in the wrong direction on these things. I think that austerity has proven not to work. If you look at the UK right now, they're going into a second recession. We need to invest in our infrastructure here in Ontario to make sure that we are leaving a legacy we can be proud of for our children and our grandchildren. I'll stop there. Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Okay, that concludes the time for questions and comments. We return to the member for Thornhill for his reply.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Thank you very much, Speaker. In reverse order, let me address my friend from Davenport—my new friend from Davenport. Sometimes what you talk about when you use the term "old ideas" are just tried and true ideas. In other words, if you tighten your belt sometimes, you have something left in your pocket; your pants don't fall down. That's the only message here. I don't any less than you want clean air and clean water as I leave the stage and my kids and my grandchildren take it. I think those are important things. I think the issue for us is not to disagree on those things, but to figure out ways that we can make that happen.

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I think that in the case of this government, they, in the name of those things, take action that is inappropriate, and I'll cite just by way of example the whole energy file, without going into it again, because I've amply explored it. You can have renewables that result in clean air, but you can get them in a much better way than spending billions and billions of dollars you don't really have to get them.

Let me also address, since it's been brought up by both of the NDP speakers, this issue of \$500,000. What is it you hate so much about people who have actually been

successful? The fact of the matter is that maybe you can start making zero and maybe you ultimately wind up with \$500,000. I'm not here to defend people who make \$500,000. I represent Thornhill, as you represent Davenport or you do Hamilton East-Stoney Creek. I have people who are poor there. I have people on social assistance. I have people whose kids are waiting for a place in whatever treatment centre you want to talk about. I have drug abuse and alcohol abuse. We all have these things in our ridings and we all want to address them.

I want to thank my friend from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound for seeing the light and agreeing with me, and my friend from Etobicoke Centre for talking about the fact that we really do need to work together to make things happen in this province.

Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Before I call for further debate, I would remind all members to make their comments through the Chair.

Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: We have before us today Bill 55. You know, we get bills like this after every budget. It's a bill that enacts a whole bunch of legislative changes that allow the government's budget to go forward.

Now, people talked to me and they said, "Why did the NDP put down certain conditions that the government met, and why did you then sit on your hands and not vote with the government?" I said, "Well, this is about negotiation. This is about trying to change. This is about taking an opportunity where one exists without having to necessarily bring down a government at the time."

You know, we sat there in the lock-up. I sat there in the lock-up on that day, as many of the people in this room did. I watched as the Minister of Finance stood up and talked about his budget. I was somewhat aghast when I heard some of the ideas, although many of them had been leaked for weeks and months before that. He had leaked the thing about the horse racing industry. He had leaked about not looking at any new forms of revenue. He had leaked a whole bunch of things. But what I didn't know at that stage, as I listened to the finance minister, was how the Conservatives were going to react to this. Because as I listened to the finance minister, I thought this was a Progressive Conservative budget. I closed my eyes and I thought I was listening to Mike Harris speak. Instead, I was listening to Dwight Duncan speak. But they said many of the same things: the same words, the same phrases, the same target group. It was exactly the same.

I was sitting beside Andrea Horwath as we watched Tim Hudak, or the Leader of the Opposition—I should be formal here—and the member from Thornhill, who is the budget critic. They got up onto the little stage and they started to address the assorted members of the press. There were at least a hundred people in the room, and they had some pretty pointed and tough questions. We watched from a TV monitor in another room because we weren't allowed into the press area at that point, and I remember turning to Andrea Horwath as the Conserva-

tives said that they weren't going to vote for the budget, they were going to vote it down. They thought it was time for an election. We looked at each other and figured, well, it was up to us. We were going to have to try to do something on our own. We knew that we could not count on the Conservatives, because all they saw were things that were wrong; they didn't see anything that was right. They were, I think, truly looking at it in a political way. They thought that this was going to be a tough budget that people wouldn't like. On that they were right, but they had no answers as to what they were going to do to change it.

We talked for a few minutes, the leader of the NDP and I. We talked about what we could possibly do, and we decided that we had to do something but we needed to take our time, we needed to contact people, we needed to find out what the public wanted, we needed to talk to our own caucus, and that it was premature, and I don't think very good politics, to say you were going to vote against it before you even consulted with a soul. So we decided then and there that something had to be done.

We were dissatisfied with the budget because we saw that there was no real balance. There was no real balance with the austerity that was being proposed and the number of jobs that were likely to be created out of that austerity. We saw no real balance between those who work hard and save and do everything they can every day and who pay their taxes, and those who had a lot of money and oftentimes saw fit to put their taxes into shelters and send it offshore, and who earned \$500,000 a year or more and didn't pay any more taxes than an ordinary person on the street. We didn't see that kind of balance.

And all that period of time leading up to that, I remembered the Drummond report. We all waited for the Drummond report. Do you know that that man put out a blueprint with one arm tied behind his back because this government would not let him look at any revenue source? It's all well and good to say where you have to cut everything, but he wasn't even allowed the single option of finding revenue for this government. That's really what is important. That's how government balances the books. You have revenue on one side and expenditures on the other. If you're trying to do what this government is trying to do, you're going to cut all of the programs because you're unwilling to look at the revenue sources. You instructed Mr. Drummond to do that, and he did it.

I remembered back to my own time when I was mayor of East York. You know, I took over from the previous mayor, who came into this very Legislature, Dave Johnson: good man, tried hard, probably one of the most parsimonious people I have ever met in my entire life in his own personal life but also in the life of the municipality of the borough of East York. He wouldn't spend a dime if he didn't have to spend a dime and he was very careful.

But I became the mayor and I had a different attitude. The attitude wasn't that I was going to waste any money.

The attitude was that if we wanted East York to be a better place, we had to grow the revenue. That's what governments have to look at and what this government has not done in this bill or in this budget.

Part of the way, you know, over that period of five years before we were so brutally amalgamated against the wishes of the people, it was, I think, a real renaissance in East York. I like to look back, and the people who live there even to this day say it was too, because not only did we develop the municipality and build day-care centres and new community libraries and community structures, not only did we pave all the roads and go from one of the worst road systems in the entire province to one of the best, not only did we build sidewalks, not only did we do all the things, but we actually paid down the entire debt of the municipality and never raised taxes once.

People say, "Well, how could you do that? How could a New Democrat do this kind of thing?" What we did is we found a revenue source. We went out and talked to businesspeople and found out what they needed in order to want to come to East York. The only new factory that was built in the years 1990 to 1995, or in that entire decade, in all of what was then Metropolitan Toronto was built in East York. Why did the factory come to us? They could have gone to Mississauga, they could have gone to North York; they could have gone anywhere, but they came to us because we recognized what people needed. They didn't necessarily need a tax writedown. What they wanted from the municipality was action and, when they submitted their plan, that that plan would be acted upon. We had a program that anybody who wanted to build in East York and who wanted a permit could get that permit and action and an answer within 90 days. That was the whole thing, and the businesses started to flow in.

You know, I was on the hydro commission and we wired all of East York because we knew that the new businesses that were going to come in to our vacant factories were businesses that were going to need—to figure out animation and all those things—computerization and having the facilities wired. So we wired all of East York. We were first. That was even before it was done on King Street in Toronto. All of those buildings were filled. They were all filled, you know, and we had money to pay down our debts and we had money to do the social programs. It was all done, and then we got amalgamated.

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But that's what I'm trying to tell you, that it can be done. New Democrats have done this all across the country. In fact, if you go out and look at who has the best budgetary processes of any government, you won't find Conservatives and you won't find Liberals, you'll find New Democrats. You'll find that in British Columbia—

Mr. Paul Miller: Manitoba.

Mr. Michael Prue: You'll find that in Manitoba and Saskatchewan—

Mr. Paul Miller: Nova Scotia.

Mr. Michael Prue: You'll find it today in Nova Scotia, because New Democrats understand that issue, and the government fails to understand the issue because the government simply wants to cut and doesn't want to look at revenue sources.

I'm heartened to see that the world is changing very rapidly. I watched the news yesterday, and first of all in France I watched M. Hollande, who took over from a pretty right-wing government, the government of Mr. Sarkozy. I watched what he was saying and what he was doing. He was saying that austerity doesn't work for the people of France; he has given them a new way out, a new direction in which to head, and the people of France have chosen that because they don't want to choose the cut and burn and slash of Mr. Sarkozy and all of his ilk.

Then a little bit later in the news I watched Germany. Now, it wasn't the German national elections, but it was the German elections in a couple of their state governments. Those who were part of the Merkel team phalanx in the provinces lost. Even the ultra-conservative provinces, that had never voted anything except for Christian Democrat their entire life, lost, because they could see that what was happening to them was not the right thing, and they were looking for new solutions. The solutions were that we're all in this together and we all have to pay together.

Then I watched Greece. Heaven knows that's a difficult place. It's a pretty difficult place. I've been there many times. I have many Greeks who live in my riding. I go to all of their events, and I know them very well. It's very difficult because that's a very fractured Parliament, but if you see what happened, the government and the government before that were decimated in the polls. Both the NDP—it's the New Democracy Party, but they're the right-wing party—and the Pasok, which is sort of more like the NDP, they both lost. The big winner was the more left-wing party; they vaulted from a very minor party into now the second party and are probably the ones over the next six to eight days who are going to be given the opportunity of trying to put forward a coalition. Again, what happened in Greece is that those old, tired ideas of privatization and everything this government is trying to do have been rejected.

Last but not least, I watched Mr. Obama as he makes mincemeat out of the Republicans in the United States, and it just tells the home truth: We're all in this together, and we all have to do the right things.

So what are those right things?

Interjections.

Mr. Michael Prue: I heard some mutterings over there.

What are the right things? The most important thing this government or any government in Canada can do at this time is the creation of jobs and job growth, and that is not happening. It is not happening because it isn't just how many regulations you're going to cut, and it isn't just how many taxes you're going to slice; it's how you prepare for the growth that makes that possible, how you take the impediments away, how you provide the ser-

vices, whether it was me in East York wiring a community—and I know that's much smaller potatoes than a provincial or a federal government—or if it's just making sure that when someone wants to build that you give them the tools and the ability to do it in a speedy way.

We know that in Ontario we have unemployment above the national level, and it's much higher than the national rate. We know in Ontario that the weekly wage has been declining and has declined for the last 20 years. Once you factor in inflation, people in Ontario are making less money today than they were making in 1995, and that says a whole lot.

Do you want to know why people are upset and ordinary people are starting to become disenchanted with this place and politics? It's because life is not improving for ordinary people. It is improving for those who make a lot of money. It is improving for the big captains of industry, for the CEOs, for the hospital magnates. For all of those people, life is pretty good, but for ordinary people it has not improved at all since 1995.

We know that in Ontario, when they ask, we have the lowest rate across all of Canada in terms of optimism about the future. People are looking to the future with some kind of trepidation. It isn't the trepidation, I hope, of thinking that 2012 is the great Mayan calendar year when the world goes through upheaval, although for many of them, it's going through enormous upheaval as people lose their jobs and people lose their buying power.

Here we have the government. What does the government do? It goes back to the old levers, the ones that my friend from the Progressive Conservatives talks about, the ones that the government does. Tired old things: privatization, deregulation and cutting taxes for the wealthy.

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: As my learned friend behind me says, this is what got us into the position in the first place. If you go back to Reaganomics and you go back to all of the things that were happening in the United Kingdom and Margaret Thatcher and you see what governments did, they all tried to do what they did, and it all had disastrous consequences for the people in those countries.

Today Britain is in decline. Today, if you go down to the United States you will see tens of thousands, maybe millions, of houses that are boarded up. Those were the wrong things to do. The right thing to do is for everyone to pull their own weight, to pay into the system and to build together. That's what we need to do and that's what New Democrats are bound and determined to do.

I looked at this bill, Bill 55. What's in this bill that causes anybody to say, "Wow. What a great bill. How is this going to help me?"

The first thing I looked at was schedule 28. Schedule 28 is the government's answer: how you're going to set up new corporations to help the public get ripped off. Pretty simple. If you look at schedule 28, it makes ServiceOntario the new Ornge. We all know about Ornge. We've heard of nothing except Ornge pretty much since this Legislature came back. We've heard about the rip-offs of the system, about the spinoffs, the

creating of new agencies inside it—some of them public; some of them private; some of them hidden.

We've heard about Mr. Mazza making \$1.4 million. We've heard about his girlfriend, his water ski instructor, who suddenly made \$120,000 working her way up through the system in a couple of weeks.

We heard about the \$90,000 MBAs that people were paying. We heard about the helicopters. We heard about the motorcycle. That's what the government created. That's what then-Minister Smitherman created. That's what this government has allowed to happen.

Look at schedule 28. There is a quote; I'm quoting straight from the act. They're going to set up all these public-private corporations in ServiceOntario. I quote from the act, what we have before us: "No action or other proceeding may be brought against the crown for a delegate's actions."

Ah. So here is the government spinning off ServiceOntario, but no action can be taken from the public when it goes bad: can't investigate it, can't send in the auditor, can't ask questions, can't send in the Ombudsman, can't do anything. But let's just do this. Because the government has great ideas, you know? They've already tried the P3 model. They went out to Brampton, to the hospital. We all remember that: built at twice the cost. The taxpayers got ripped off, but there it is, and they always stand up and say, "But Brampton's got a brand new hospital." Yes, anybody can have a brand new hospital at twice the cost. Let's hope we don't have too many brand new hospitals like the Brampton hospital. Let's hope that when we need a hospital in a community, we build it ourselves. Let's hope that the public has its own money spent wisely and well. Let's hope that we don't do anything more like that.

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You know, this government is creating, under this new section 28, a brand new holding company. It is created and it's going to allow for-profit and not-for-profit spin-offs. It has network profit and non-profit subsidiaries of ServiceOntario, if those go through, and it's going to allow private sector leverage. We've been talking about private sector leverage. Do you know what that means? It means that when you go in and renew your driver's licence, the spinoff companies then have access to your name and can sell you other things. They know your name, your address, your SIN; they can sell you other things. So, all these for-profit and not-for-profit spinoffs are going to have action, and that's called leverage. That's going to be allowed; in fact, promoted. That's what this government is doing. I don't know how you think that's going to create jobs. I do know how it's going to make some corporations and people very, very wealthy. I do know that it's going to create other Dr. Mazzas, and I do know that maybe there will be orange and blue helicopters, and other colours, flying around the province, if you get away with this.

The legislation goes even further. Not only does it allow for the creation of these private sector P3 models in the Ontario government; it also allows them throughout

the entire MUSH sector, being municipalities, universities, schools and hospitals. So they can even spin off services to the MUSH sector. Is that what this government thinks? Is this your job creation plan? Is this what you're trying to do? Is this what you think the people of Ontario want? Because I have to tell you, I don't think the people of Ontario want this at all.

I looked at schedule 16, Mr. Speaker. Schedule 16 sets up a brand new regulatory regime. What this means is that regulations that in the past were administered by government will now be regulated by the industries themselves. What a wonderful thing: Let the industrial empire make their own rules and regulate themselves, so that—whoa. Does anybody here remember Sunrise and the propane? That was one of Mike Harris's best ones: Regulate the industry yourself. Let Sunrise regulate themselves, let the whole propane industry regulate themselves, and then watch as a whole block goes up in an explosion and flames and people die.

That's what is being promised here. Schedule 16 says that private industrial groups can control the regulatory bodies and that they can be their own watchdog. Is that going to save the government some money? Maybe. Is it going to make life better for ordinary Ontarians? Absolutely not.

Then, Mr. Speaker, I looked at the environment. There's a whole bunch of stuff in here about the environment that is really, really horrendous to me. You know, I listened to my friend from Davenport. He often talks about the environment. I know he is the critic in that area, but he talks about it with a great deal of passion. I listened as well to my colleague Mr. Shurman from the Conservative Party, who says we all support the environment.

I'm not so sure that the government members over there, especially the backbenchers—have you had a chance to see what Bill 55 does to the environment? Have you had anybody come and lobby you on this yet? I know I have somebody coming to see me this afternoon, and the environmentalists are really fit to be tied with what they're reading here. It's taken a while for them to get through the tome—this is a tome; it's at least an inch thick of little tiny minutiae and details. But if you get into the environment, what you're going to see is that the laws to amend the environment and all the administration by the Ministry of Natural Resources—it's all in there—are all being amended without discussion, being hidden in a type of omnibus bill.

I was reading in the paper about the government in the Ottawa, the Conservative government. They've hidden a whole bunch of things in an omnibus bill, particularly on the environment, to try to get around the environmental laws of Canada. Well, in the province, you did the same thing. You just hid it—

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: Yes, it's Harperesque.

You hid it here in the budget bill. What this does is, it diminishes the role of the province in looking out for endangered species. Do members over there know that

you're doing this in this budget? Do you know what's contained in here? The entire endangered species legislation is at risk because all of the meat and the bones of what is in that act is being given away. The stuff around the Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act is all being changed within the body of Bill 55. The fish and wildlife act is being changed within the body of Bill 55. The Public Lands Act is being changed within the body. The Crown Forest Sustainability Act is being changed, and so is the Niagara Escarpment act. All of these are little tiny changes that are contained within this budget bill which are designed to weaken the environment and weaken the effect that the province has had in the past over sustaining something that we all hold very dear to us.

In that same act, the government's rationale—and here are the words that are scary to me. They use the word “modernize” over and over and over again. They use the word “streamlining” over and over and over. And last but not least, they use the words “focusing on our core business.” The environment is everybody's business.

Are there flaws in our environmental process here in Ontario? Yes, there are. Can they be improved? Yes, they can. Is this budget bill the vehicle to best preserve the environment or to change it so that it makes us more sustainable, so that it makes our environment a safer place for ourselves and our children? No, it is not.

What is intended to happen here under this bill is that there are going to be new exemptions on habitat and species protection. I know how important that is and how hard it is even today to get the Ministry of Natural Resources, the environment ministry to come down and look when something goes wrong.

My wife and I have a small summer home in the riding of Essex, close to Windsor, and not too far away from our house is an eagle's nest. All of the residents who live on this island like to go and watch that eagle's nest. There's a developer on the island who was trying to build homes. I'm not going to say anything against him. That's his job. That's where he makes his money. He was told that he had to stay at least 100 metres away from the tree that houses the eagle's nest. Did he stay 100 metres away? Absolutely not. He bulldozed down hundreds and hundreds of trees, chipped them and carried them away and came perilously close to that nest. He did that because he can and because there is nobody in the province who could come by on less than three or four days' or a week's notice and stop him. The town was powerless to stop him. All of the conservation authorities were powerless to stop him. Here we have new exemptions to the habitat and species protections that are going to even take that away.

When you talk about what can be saved, it may not mean a lot to some people, but it certainly means a lot to me and probably even more to my wife. She's trying to save a little habitat of a Blanding's turtle. She's trying to save a habitat of the eastern fox snake, which is an endangered species that has been extirpated from most of Ontario. She's trying to save some little tiny marshland

and the eagle's nest, and there is nobody in the province who has been able, to date, to help her to do that, to stop people from this wanton development. And now I read in this that there are going to be new exemptions to make it even more difficult for habitat and species protection because anything that is private property will not be protected. Anything which is within 100 metres of somebody's home will be exempt from the law, which has been put in place, I think, for good purpose.

We need to have a real discussion about this. We don't need to have it in a bill, hidden away in the middle of a budget preparation, where it's going to be missed.

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We go on and see what this is. There are provisions in here for extending the guideline for implementation and species recovery. That means when you say you have to redo the area, when you have to let the wetlands revert back to what they were or allow the trees to grow, or the hundred things that the MNR might be involved in—to help extend the guidelines of implementation for species recovery—that's all being taken out. The bill is taking it out. Members over there need to know what your bill is doing. It's taking it out.

Land use permits: It's going to allow for the government, or an agency that they're going to spin it off to, to allow for land use permits in provincial parks and reserves. That means you're going to be able to build roads through our provincial parks. It means you're going to be able to sell off some of the land. Heaven forbid. We've seen the brouhaha here in Toronto, where the mayor wants to buy a little parcel of conservation land and everybody in the whole city, it appears, is upset about this, because no parkland has been sold in Toronto in the last couple of decades. But this is going to open it wide up, because land use permits in provincial parks and reserves are now going to be open.

Does anybody in the government over there realize what's happening in this bill? Has anybody over there spoken about this, even in caucus or to the public? I haven't heard a word.

It also said it will make it easier to build roads, so that we can build roads in our parks. I understand that we do need access roads through forests, and I understand that some roads are necessary for tourism, but this is going to make it easier to build roads without environmental approval.

The MNR is a compromised ministry. In 1995, MNR had 1.6% of all of the money in the budget of Ontario. In 1995, 1.6% was for MNR. Today, that's down to 0.5%. MNR, in the period of some 18 years, 17 years, has gone from having 1.6% of the budget down to 0.5% of the budget. It's one third. The number of employees is less than half. The resources they had are gone. And if it weren't bad enough, the government has enacted a whole bunch of environmental legislation. There are now 46 acts for the MNR to enforce, as opposed to 28 acts back in 1995, and they have less workers and less money. It's no wonder that the deputy minister said that the ministry is now compromised. I use that word used by the deputy

minister. MNR is compromised, and this bill is going to compromise them even more.

Let's go into labour. What's contained—hidden—in this tome of a bill? There's the essential service arbitration. Why is this in a budget bill? Because it can be hidden; that's why it's there. It can be hidden. What this is going to do is wherever there is an essential service that goes to arbitration—very often those arbitrations take a year or two years or sometimes even longer; they're complex and they're difficult. But the system works; it's cumbersome but it works. Well, this bill is going to say that arbitration cannot last more than 12 months, and then the government has the right to impose a settlement. This is going to cause labour strife; I'm absolutely mindful of that. Also, this has been done without any discussion with the affected parties, be they the union, be they the government ministries, or the arbitrators themselves. No one has been spoken to at all about this, but there it is.

Oh, of course, there's also that lovely thing that the Conservatives always want to talk about: the ability to pay. It's in there too: ability to pay. Now, I'm mindful, as a former mayor, that it's difficult sometimes. Municipalities do have difficulty paying. They have limited revenue sources. They also have to negotiate and pay, whether it be for firefighters or police or anybody else that they hire, and they have a limited ability to pay. But the arbitration process has been set up to make sure that there is some semblance of fairness across all of Ontario and some semblance to those employees who do not have the right to strike. This is going to hamstring arbitrators and hamstringing the collective bargaining process, as much as it exists.

Then you've got the whole issue about balancing the books. That's sort of not in here, and maybe it should be more in here. The other day, Mr. Speaker, I had the privilege of coming back into the Legislature to vote for the motion that Mr. Arnott had filed about balancing the books. It was a very good motion. In fact, I think that that is exactly what should be done. Every government, when it no longer finds itself in deficit position, should be looking at at least paying a percentage of the money that they have in excess to pay down debts. It's certainly what I did when I was a mayor. We took any monies that were left over at the end of the year and we paid down the debt. Now, the debt wasn't in the magnitude of the debt of the province of Ontario, but when I became mayor of East York it was some \$13 million. By the time I left, five years later, it was nothing. There was a concerted effort that we made each and every year to take that money and put aside enough money to pay the debts because it was our goal, that we never saw realized because we were amalgamated, to have a debt-free municipality at the end of the payback period. I think we should have a goal like that in Ontario. That's why I was pleased to support the motion of Mr. Arnott.

We cannot, as a society, any longer say that the debts are going to be inherited by our children and our children's children and their children. The debt is too

enormous and it can never be resolved, provided that governments continue to go constantly into deficit position and constantly are afraid to look at where to find the new revenues—

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: Or the cut in spending, as my Conservative likes to say. They always want to see the cut in spending. They never want to see the new revenues, because I know who they're protecting and they know who they're protecting as well.

But I think, and I'm a New Democrat, we are all in this together. From the person who pushes the broom in a factory floor, to the Warren Buffets of Canada, to the Conrad Blacks who've recently come from prison to live in his palatial manor in the Bridle Path, we are all in this together, and we all have to pay together and we all have to give the portion of taxes that are necessary to make sure that Ontario grows.

There would have been things that would have been great to have seen in this budget that weren't there. There would have been monies that we would have got from places, from either cutting back in certain ministries or by extra revenue. I just want to float some of them here for a minute, if I may, Mr. Speaker.

Health care: We all know that health care is expensive. We all know that we have to pay for it. We all know we have an aging population. We all know that the system that we have cannot be sustained in the long term if increases are going to be radically higher than the rate of inflation. You know, it's been a 5% to 7% increase year after year after year into health care in Ontario, and to what effect? We still have waiting lists for people in long-term-care facilities that can't be met. We still have waiting lists for people who want to remain in their own homes who cannot remain in their own homes because personal service workers—there aren't enough of them and they get paid so poorly that many of them don't want to stay. That's where the real money needs to be spent. But I didn't see any of that, really, in this budget. I saw an increase, a small one, but it is not enough to address the problem and the tsunami that is coming as the boomers age. It is not enough to even meet the needs of today.

I think we should have a revolution in health care, and I do believe that those people who live in long-term-care facilities deserve the 3.5 hours that George Smitherman promised all those many years ago with tears in his eyes and that has never been delivered. That's what I would have liked to have seen in Bill 55.

Look at job creation. There's nothing in there about job creation. Oh, yeah, they've got that same old tired stuff. Thank goodness the Liberals listen to some common sense. I should use "conventional wisdom"; I don't want to talk "common sense," because we all knew that that was nonsensical when that phrase was used politically.

1540

They have stopped the corporate giveaways by stopping the corporate tax cuts and capping them for a couple

of years, but they said "until we get back into balance." I don't know whether that's ever going to happen under any Liberal government in the history of Ontario, but they've said they are going to do that. But that isn't enough.

We in the New Democratic Party believe you can do so much more that isn't being done. We believe that we can have job creation by buying Ontario. We can look at rewarding those companies that create jobs with tax incentives to do so, or maintain jobs with tax incentives to do so. We know that a whole lot more—an investment tax credit, a training tax credit, a buy Ontario—my goodness, we could even look at Ontario Northland. I'm delighted to see the minister responsible for that here today.

Ontario Northland: I live in Toronto. I've lived in southern Ontario my entire life. I have visited the north every opportunity I've had as an MPP, and before then—to travel across northern Ontario by car, by rail, by plane, every way, because it is a wide and huge province. The people who live in the north deserve and should expect the same services as the people who live in southern Ontario.

Every day when I get on the TTC, I know that the fare that I put in the box—\$2.50; I buy tokens—does not cover the fare. I know that it's being subsidized, at first by the provincial government, and latterly mostly by Toronto. It is being subsidized by government. The reason it's being subsidized is because it's the right thing to do. It ensures that everyone has access to employment, to a doctor's care, to going to school, to getting out and about. It's the right thing to do.

I know when I get on the GO train—I've only travelled that a few times; I'm not a regular user—that's subsidized. It needs to be subsidized because people have to travel the distances.

I know some of the bus services—Greyhound, in central Ontario, is subsidized because we want people to be able to move from town to town within the modal splits, all of those things that politicians like to talk about. It needs to be subsidized.

But when it comes to the north, the subsidy is not to be there, and I think this is extremely short-sighted.

I promised one of my neighbours who lives right close to me in East York—he's a travel writer, and he sent me a very thoughtful letter the other day, talking about Ontario Northland, talking about it as a potential tourist boon that has not been used. It's conceivable that it can open up much of the country to wilderness hiking and canoeing. It's conceivable that it can be used to reunite families or keep communities in touch with each other, particularly small, northern, isolated communities and First Nations communities. He talked about the necessity of keeping the Ring of Fire as a commercial operation because someday the north is going to boom as the south has. Someday there are going to be more people in northern Ontario taking advantage of the resources that are available there—forestry or mining or farming or everything else that is conceivable to go there—and

without an infrastructure, without a railway, it's going to be very, very difficult.

I know it loses money. My goodness, Air Canada loses money, but do we say you can't have planes flying across the country? Most transportation systems aren't going to make money. Anybody who owns a car knows that it costs, but you pay it because you think it's important that the transportation be maintained. Buying the gas doesn't pay for the roads or the bridges or anything else. Buying the insurance—you have to have it—is a costly expense. But it is far more costly to say that those towns, those villages, those places where people live will now be without hope. How many of them are going to become ghost towns? How many people are going to have to move because they have no way of getting around?

I am very disappointed about this. I am very, very disappointed.

I know within the body of this bill that there are amendments that can be made. We intend to make them. I know within the body of this bill we want to do an investment tax credit. I know we want to look at job creation, training tax credits, Buy Ontario—all of those things that can happen and should have happened.

Do you want to know where to save money? I've asked this government a hundred times. I've made speeches on it, I've gone to all-candidates meetings, I've talked in here: in education. Why does this government insist on spending \$50 million a year on EQAO? Why does anybody over there want to spend \$50 million on EQAO?

You know, it's pretty simple. I'm a kid from Regent Park. That's where I grew up. I could have told you when I was a kid that those children who grew up in Rosedale probably got better marks than me and everybody in my class, because they did. I could have told you that the school in Rosedale had better teachers and better grades and better opportunity, if you were lucky enough to go there, than if you went to the school in Regent Park.

It is of no surprise to me at all today, when I see the listing that EQAO mandates and spends and the bureaucracy that the government allows to continue in education on EQAO and the spending of \$50 million, to see that the schools in Forest Hill do better than the schools in Jane-Finch. Anybody over there surprised they don't? I mean, you don't need to spend \$50 million to know this. And you've got to do something as well.

Then you look and you see what the school culture is, and you see the parents all banding together. I mean, I'm very proud in my community. I go to a lot of fundraisers, I go to schools where the parents are banding together and they're trying to raise funds. They have dances and night things and silent auctions and they do all this stuff. I know which schools do it, too. It's not the poor schools. I have poor schools. I've never been to one of those fundraisers in Crescent Town school or Second school. I've never gone to one of the ones that are inner-city and where the kids are from immigrant parents and seen this kind of stuff. I see these wonderful things taking place in

the Beach, in the Upper Beach. I see them in the communities of professionals. That's really what's happening. The government needs to start looking at where you can save money from EQAO and put it back into those schools that need it, that can't afford to do the fundraising.

I'm looking at the government in terms of the Ring of Fire. You know, here is an opportunity for Ontario. I don't see too much in Bill 55 that's going to help that. I see the Northland gone. I don't see a whole lot of stuff around how that's going to be built. I see negotiations taking place with developers and mining interests and all those people who are going to make a lot of money, but I don't see the communities that are affected being part of it. I guess that's what makes me a New Democrat. I think that everybody is in it together, that everybody needs to be consulted, everybody needs to move forward with one voice, everybody needs to know that the government works for them. It's not enough just to have it imposed from above.

So here we are: Bill 55. People come in to see me from the environment, the teachers who are angry, people who are angry that there's no real job creation, people who are angry about a whole bunch of things that they see here and ask what we are going to do.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we're going to try to do the same thing that we did with the budget itself. We are not going to walk away, as my friends in the Conservative Party did when the budget was announced, as I watched them on TV that day with Andrea Horwath, the leader of the NDP. We knew on that day it was up to us. If we are going to make this Legislature work for the people of Ontario, if everybody is going to be part of making a move, of making Ontario the kind of place it can be again, then we have to do what is right. We are not going to walk away. We are not going to ring bells. We are going to go to committee, and we are going to try to change the most egregious parts. We're going to try to put things into the bill which will help ordinary Ontarians to cope. We are going to make suggestions on where money can be saved and how it can be saved. We are going to make suggestions on where money can be found. I think that's what we need to do.

These are very difficult things to do. It's easier to vote no. It's easier to do what the Conservatives do. It's easier just to say, "This is a bad government," and vote it down, and, "Let's go out and knock on doors for the next six weeks." But that is not what the people of Ontario expect, nor is it what they want.

1550

We went out and we asked the people of Ontario, and polling was done later on that confirmed it: "Do you want an election held right away?" The answer was overwhelmingly no. Then we asked them, "What you want us to do?" They said, "We want you to wring whatever concessions you can from the government to make the budget better." This will be exactly the same here. I want the members opposite to know that we will be in committee every day, when this goes to committee. We

will be listening to the people who want to make deputations—and I know there are a lot. I have already received a list of some 40 people who have indicated that they have approached the clerk's office in order to make deputations on this bill.

If finance committee, in its wisdom, of which I am a member but not the Chair, decides it wants to hear those people, the standard practice is that we can hear four an hour. That would take about 10 hours, or about two days, to hear them all. But that's only today, and we haven't even advertised. We know that people out there have a lot of problems with this bill. If they're environmentalists, they have huge problems. If they're teachers who are negotiating or doctors who are negotiating, they have huge problems. If they're anyone else who just wants some fairness, they're going to be here as well.

So I'm saying to the members opposite: This bill needs to go to committee, and this committee may in fact have to travel. We may have to go to northern Ontario to ask about the railway. We may have to go to Ottawa or to wherever. We may have to listen to many, many deputations, but in the end we have an obligation to all of the people of this province to do what is right. And what is right is to make the province work for them, not for the special interests, not for those who are able to lobby the government and have ministries dismantled, not for those who have great big dollar-bill signs in their eyes saying that we can privatize ServiceOntario and we can do all the things to set up a new Ornge around ServiceOntario and make millions of mega dollars on the part of taxpayers. No; we've had enough of all of those things. The people of Ontario expect more and they expect better, and that's what we intend to do.

Mr. Speaker, I'm not even going to use my full hour. I think I've said what needs to be said, but I do want the government opposite to know that this bill is not going to go through as it is written. It needs to be changed in a major way. New Democrats are here to work. We will make those changes. We will make Ontario better for all of us.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: It was with interest that I listened to the member from Beaches–East York talk about his version of the bill in front of us. Our leader went to see the Premier in December and talked about what we needed to see in this budget. It was simple: some control of spending and a real jobs plan. We look back at what we got with this budget, and we got neither. In fact, we got a government that sat there and criticized us for not being there.

Within days, we saw the world markets react to this budget, with a credit watch on the first day, and later on, another downgrade, the third downgrade that this government has seen. We haven't seen downgrades since the days of Bob Rae and the NDP. Then the people of Ontario needed, I guess, what our member referred to as the Common Sense Revolution, where we go in and actually make government work and support business.

In this province, it should not be a bad thing to earn a profit. If it wasn't for these companies earning a profit, paying taxes, contributing to many of our charities and making the province work, we wouldn't have a province here. I think we have to get back to making this province competitive. We're looking at how we've squandered our money, whether it be on the Ornge ambulance or eHealth or the Oakville or Mississauga power plants. There are so many of these examples. But what's a simple answer? It's not a matter of watching what we spend. The simple answer is, "Raise taxes. How can we get more revenue?" Well, enough is enough. People in my riding are complaining.

I know I just have a second, but do you know what I heard back when we were talking about this budget? People sending me emails saying, "Go to an election. We can't afford the government." I think that's the message. They can't afford the government we have today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I'm very pleased to join in the debate. I listened very attentively to the last portion of the remarks of my colleague from Beaches, and I agree wholeheartedly. I think it's important to keep in mind that there are ways to save money that could address efficiencies.

Something I've heard time and time again from not only teachers but just concerned citizens is that the money that we're wasting on the EQAO should have been the first thing that this government looked at in terms of cutting when we're looking at education. There are countless other areas where we need to strengthen and reinforce our education system, but that's one that should have been the first on the minds of those who were making the decisions, to look at cutting it.

It touches on the other issue: Where has the consultation been? Historically, before the budget was ever passed or even proposed, there was active consultation with Ontarians, and that was lacking in this. There are a number of concerned people, and we need to hear from them in deputations. I wholeheartedly support the fact that our job here is to make the Legislature work, and we're not going to sit idly by. We are going to make sure that this bill is not passed as is and that there are some serious changes made to make it more fair, to inject some fairness back into the bill, to ensure that it takes care of those who are hard hit. I reinforce the commitment that we are not going to let this bill slide through as is, that we will fight hard to ensure that the concerns of Ontarians are represented. We will make sure that the Legislature works at the same time, but we will be resolute in enforcing our will to ensure that the people of Ontario are represented, that there's fairness for all and that we don't proceed with a just-cut-for-all process.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. David Zimmer: Speaker, the most important thing that we, as legislators, can do for the people of Ontario is get our economy back on a solid, solid footing.

So how do we do that? Well, economists tell us, rating agencies tell us, our constituents tell us, that the single most important thing we can do is to deal with our deficit. That's why we are undertaking to deal with this deficit and to have it dealt with over the next five years.

Now, everybody has a role to play in helping us deal with the deficit. That's why recently you've seen the number of initiatives where we've asked the people of Ontario, our public service sector, our physicians—we've asked people to step up to the plate, and indeed we've asked members of this Legislature to step up to the plate, and contribute to that process of reducing the deficit by working with us on holding the line on salaries. Holding the line on salaries is a symbol of this province's commitment to dealing with the deficit in the next five years.

The economists tell us that for every dollar that we are going to take in in revenues, we've got to take in another \$4 in savings in order to deal with this deficit problem.

My sense, just talking to my constituents and reading the media, the press, all of the newspapers, the big-city papers, the small-town papers, is that there is an appetite—there is more than an appetite; there is a demand—by the people of Ontario to see us deal with this deficit, because they realize that dealing with the deficit over the next five years is the best possible way to restore Ontario to its traditional leadership in the economy of this country and in this province. That's the challenge that we have to face. That's why we all have to step up to the plate.

Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's my pleasure to speak to my NDP colleague from Beaches–East York, but I have to say right off the bat that his opening comment was that our party and our leader, Tim Hudak, stood up immediately and said no. Well, that's not true. We did go with ideas, concrete ideas, with what we said needed to be done to get this ship turned around, and that was rejected outright. So then we stood on principle and said, "You know what? We are going to draw a line in the sand," because we have Liberals and NDP who just want to keep spending us down and putting us over this deficit cliff. We're at \$15 billion, heading to \$30 billion. You can't continue to add more deficit onto that and expect to get anywhere. We cannot go down this slippery slope.

1600

I would like to ask, who pays? How much is left if debt repayment gets to \$30 billion, like it's projected by their economist? How many people then will receive the help that they always talk about?

Revenue, he said, versus cutting spending: It seems like, well, we'll just go back to the taxpayers, who, right now, say to my colleague from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry—and my people are saying the same to me—"I can't take any more. I just can't afford—you keep coming back for taxes, taxes and more taxes." We can't continue to go down that road. How are we going to ensure that those revenues are there? They've had eight

years of unprecedented revenue growth, and yet they've run us into a \$15-billion deficit. We can't afford another—God forbid—eight years, let alone one or two years. We just can't go there.

I find it very interesting that they talk about jobs and cutting, but every time they seem to be able to grab the floor, they're talking about cutting out nuclear. Well, I'd like to ask the pointed question: Nuclear provides unionized, good-paying labour jobs, and those companies, and those companies that support them, are union-driven and corporate and in my community, I know, are very philanthropic and give a lot of money back to the community every time we turn around. I always find myself confused when they're always slamming corporations. But I can only assume that at the fundraisers he was referencing earlier, a lot of corporate people or companies give to those fundraisers to help the less fortunate.

So at some point, Speaker, you can't have it both ways. We need to cut spending and add some revenues.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments. I'll return to the member for Beaches–East York, who has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you to my colleagues from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, Bramalea–Gore–Malton, Willowdale and Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound for their comments. Time will only permit me to talk about a couple of them.

My colleague from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry was talking about the credit watch. There's no doubt the credit watch is there. The credit watch was pending. The credit watch had nowhere to go except where it went when the government came back with the \$15-billion deficit. I'd like to think, though, that the NDP did a little bit in terms of the taxation policy on \$500,000, because that money went directly against the deficit. That's what needs to happen, and Conservatives need to know that too: that you can't be protecting those people who earn all that much money and at the same time would not countenance paying down the deficit.

My colleague from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound said that we were adding more deficit. It is not the intention of the NDP to add more deficit. We have the same policy you did to make sure that we were out of deficit within five years. We would be much more aggressive on how to do it, though, because we also know that revenues would aid, something that you would not do.

In terms of nuclear, why is the NDP opposed to nuclear? It's not so much the safety concern. It's because every single nuclear redevelopment has gone billions of dollars over budget. The Conservatives blew an extra \$5 billion in Clarington and Pickering. You know it and I know it and the people of Ontario know it: That's where the money was wasted, and we are in such bad deficit circumstances because Conservatives wasted the money on nuclear when it did not have to be wasted. There are other places to get energy. But the cheapest form of energy—no one is listening to the NDP—is the energy you don't use. It's conservation. We produce enough

electricity in this province, if we conserved right, that we wouldn't have to build another nuclear for 50 years.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak on Bill 55. Before I get on the topic of this bill, I want to thank all the members for the best wishes they have given to me on the birth of my son, Rafi Ben Abbas Naqvi. Thank you very much.

Rafi was born Friday, April 27, at 12:27 a.m., at a mighty weight of five pounds and seven ounces. He and Christine, my lovely wife, are doing great. Thank you very much, everybody, for the nice emails and notes and gifts over the last week or so.

I'm very pleased to be speaking on Bill 55, which is the budget bill. It's an important bill that deserves the kind of debate that is taking place in the House. I'm really appreciative of the different points of view that are coming forward in this debate on this important issue, because this is probably, by far, one of the most important budgets that our government has put forward. It's an important budget because of the situation, the circumstances that we find ourselves in, not just in Ontario alone, but globally.

There is a change, there is a transition, that is taking place in the global economy. The impact and the effects of the great recession that started in 2008 and peaked in 2009 are still being felt. In fact, recovery is taking place, albeit slowly in some places of the world and at a reasonable pace in other parts. It's still a process.

As any transition period goes, the steps, the measures that are taken during that transition period, are important ones because we need to get it right. We need to make sure that we are in a solid, healthy position and place after the recession is completely over, after the recovery is complete, and Ontario in particular, obviously, for our purposes, is a stronger economy, is a vibrant place to live for all of us.

That's what this budget strives to do. The very first thing this budget does is it lays out a five-year plan to eliminate the deficit by 2017-18. That is the most important thing we need to do. I think the member for Willowdale spoke to that in one of the questions and comments. We need to ensure that the \$15-billion deficit we have right now, which we know is a result of the steps that the government took to fight the recession and make sure that Ontario doesn't get into the deep pain of the recession as we saw in the United States or we are seeing in southern Europe—we need to ensure that we are able to fight the recession. For that, we had to borrow money.

We had to make sure that we invested in our communities, and a stimulus package was introduced, along with other developed economies, along with the government of Canada and other provinces. In fact, all of our communities, all of our ridings, no matter which party or which side of the aisle you sit on, benefited from those investments. But the cost is that we had to borrow money to ensure that we protected jobs in our communities. We

had to borrow money to ensure that we protected the 400,000 jobs in the auto sector in our province, to make sure that there are good construction jobs. They were building hockey arenas and roads and bridges in our communities so that we could fight the recession.

Now that we are able to do that so successfully, we need to pay this borrowed money back. I think it's a simple principle. There's nothing more complicated or complex than that. I think people understand this at home, that sometimes you have to borrow money. We all do that. But when you borrow money, you have to have a bit of a reschedule plan. How are you going to pay back that money? And that's what we're trying to do. We need to make sure that we don't continue to move forward by borrowing more money, because when we borrow more money, we have to pay more money in interest. If we're paying money in interest, that means we are taking money from somewhere else, like spending in our health care and education, and diverting that money and paying it into interest. The best way to prevent that is to ensure that we pay back the money that we have borrowed or decrease the amount of money that we continue to borrow. And that's what the government is focused on: to take the next five years and ensure that we eliminate this deficit of \$15 billion. The discrepancy that exists in terms of the money we spend on programs and the money we collect from taxes—there's obviously, right now, a \$15-billion difference in that. We spend \$15 billion more than what we collect, and we need to find a balance where we can bring the two together. It's not rocket science.

I think at home, when you speak to Ontarians, they understand that, because that's basically a principle they use at home when they are balancing their books. You've got an income that comes in and you've got those expenses that you have to pay out, and you try to match both. Sometimes it happens that you spend more money than you take in, and that's where families actually sit around the table and they make certain decisions. They decide to make certain sacrifices. They may decide to say, "You know what? We're not going to take that extra vacation this year because we are going to save this money so that we can pay off our debt, the borrowing we have done."

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I think the same principle applies for governments. The analogy in my head is that the credit card is maxed out. You cannot just continue to borrow money at all times to pay for important programs that families rely on. That is why the single most important thing we can do right now is have a solid plan in place and then implement that plan to get off the deficit. That's the number one thing, in that we have a balance. We need a balance in place. You can't just do one way or the other. You cannot just cut programming. Something that our Conservative friends tend to argue is that you bring in a mandatory wage freeze, you cut programming here, and that's how you reduce your expenses and you'll find the balance. Or, as my NDP friends like to suggest, let's just raise taxes, let's bump up the revenues, and that's how you can eliminate the difference between the two.

Our thinking, the government's philosophy, is that the solution is somewhere in the middle. You've got to take a more balanced approach so that not only are you eliminating the deficit but you are also growing the economy at the same time and you are creating an environment to create good jobs and protecting health care and education, the two single most important services that families rely on in the province of Ontario.

What are the steps, for example, that we are taking in order to find that balance? Things that are incorporated in the budget and are outlined in Bill 55 are things like freezing the reductions in corporate income tax and business education tax. That's one of the steps we are doing. That helps on the revenue side of things. Freezing the corporate tax rate at the current rate and freezing the business education tax rate at the current rate allows more money to come in. We're also capping the Ontario clean energy benefit at 3,000 kilowatt hours per month. That's a saving. We're modifying the Ontario drug benefit program as it relates to seniors who earn more money and have the capacity to pay a little bit more into the Ontario drug benefit program. We are delaying and cancelling infrastructure projects to reduce borrowing by more than \$3 billion. That's some money we are saving on the expenditure side of things.

We're ensuring that user fees recover more of the costs of programs and services. In many instances, mostly in the transportation sector, some of the fees have not been touched since the mid-1990s or even earlier than that—making sure that those fees are more reflective of the costs today so that the costs are recovered. Most of them are on businesses because they need to make sure that they are paying the right proportion of the cost for the services they use.

We are extending the pay freeze for MPPs for an additional two years, bringing the total to five years. We are extending the pay freeze for executives at hospitals, universities, colleges, school boards and agencies for another two years.

These are some of the steps that we have outlined, not to mention that in the conversations we had with the NDP, we were able to bring in certain other measures; for example, the surtax on those Ontarians who make \$500,000 and more. We are increasing the tax rate by an additional 2% on that particular group of Ontarians until the deficit is paid off. All that money that is collected will go towards reducing the deficit.

It is a balanced approach, because that's what we need to do. So essentially, for what we are doing, for every \$4 that we are reducing our expenses, we're getting \$1 additionally in revenue. So we are finding savings of about \$17.7 billion through this budget. We have revenue-raising measures of about \$4.4 billion.

As a result of these actions over the next three years, which the budget outlines, we've got about \$22 billion less in borrowing than would have been required if we took no action.

Our premise is that that is the right way to go forward. That is the most balanced way to ensure that we are able

to balance the books by 2017-18: by eliminating the deficit, but also not take away from economic growth in this province, by ensuring that the province is a competitive place to do business and also not impacting health care and education.

I look at my community in Ottawa Centre. There are steps we announced earlier that we are moving forward with, which were part of this budget, to ensure that health care and education remain the number one priority. I'll give you an example. The University of Ottawa Heart Institute is located in my community. We had announced an expansion of the University of Ottawa Heart Institute. The heart institute is world renowned. It provides world-class care in the city of Ottawa and for the eastern Ontario region. It's a bilingual medical facility. Some of the world's best research is done at the University of Ottawa Heart Institute. In fact, a recent study that came out showed that the heart institute is in the world's top 2% in terms of the class of researchers it produces.

We are investing about \$200 million in an expansion of the heart institute. Through passing this budget that expansion continues. Why? Because it will provide for better quality care for the citizens of Ottawa and for the whole eastern Ontario region, a very important investment that is part and parcel of the budget. We're not backing away from that. We are maintaining that type of commitment to the health care sector and to my community in Ottawa Centre.

Another good example that I want to share with you, Speaker, is the investments we are making at Carleton University, again located in my riding of Ottawa Centre. We are investing, I believe, about \$14 million expanding the library at Carleton University. We have invested a lot of money in terms of building new buildings—about \$25 million to build two buildings called the Canal Building and the River Building. The next phase is to upgrade the library. It's been there for some time. I'm a former student of Carleton University. I did my master's there. I spent plenty of time—many, many hours—in the library. It is outdated. It needs the upgrade. By investing \$14 million, we're ensuring that the library will double in size. It will be state of the art. It will allow great opportunity for students at Carleton University to get an education.

I want to thank the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities for his continued support for Carleton University because, again, these are the kinds of investments that are going to ensure that we're creating a competitive economy.

Again, in this budget we did not back off from those types of investments. We are continuing with those investments, because they create a long-lasting impact. Not only do they pay immediate short-term dividends in terms of jobs that will be created in our economy, particularly in my city of Ottawa, but the result will also be in terms of better education that will be provided.

I can go through examples like this, and I'm sure all of us can give those types of examples for our communities. Again, what it highlights is a balanced approach that this budget is providing. I know that when you take a balance like this, where you try to blend both the expense side of

the ledger sheet and the revenue side of the ledger sheet to ensure that you've got a good plan, you're open to criticism.

I applaud the opposition for doing their job right. But I think that in these tough economic times we need to make sure we don't go one way or the other, because both extremes take us in a dangerous direction. They take us to a place that impacts people very, very hard. The last thing we want to do is eliminate the deficit on the backs of the people. We need to be smart about it. We need to be sophisticated in the manner in which we balance the budget, and I think we have really done so through this budget.

The other things that are important to highlight are things like continuing with full-day kindergarten. I have a lot of young families in my community and they are excited about the implementation of full-day kindergarten, because they know the impact it's going to have on their families. They know the impact it's going to have on their children. Not only are their children going to get the best education in a full-day kindergarten model, but also the savings the families have. I've got neighbourhoods in my community which are—some of the neighbourhoods are low-income. In a lot of them, the residents are new Canadians. I'm really proud to say that the very first two schools that received full-day kindergarten in my riding, the Cambridge Street Public School and the W. E. Gowing Public School, are both in the lowest-income neighbourhoods with a lot of new Canadian populations.

1620

What we did essentially by introducing full-day kindergarten in those schools is that we just gave an incredible advantage to those students coming from those families where in many instances the parents don't even speak English or French, the first two official languages, and my riding is officially bilingual, designated under the French Language Services Act. We gave those children a great opportunity. I visit these schools often and you can see the incredible impact in these children; you can see the great involvement of those parents in the school community. That's the kind of difference we are making with the implementation of full-day kindergarten, not to mention saving about \$6,200 per year per child in child care costs. So if you're a family who is new to Ottawa, you live in my community—a downtown community—in an apartment, not only is your child getting a great education in this incredible education system we've got, thanks to our teachers, early childhood educators and other educators and professionals in our schools, but you're also saving money on child care costs. That allows that family, both mom and dad, to be out there and to be able to earn a living, integrate and establish your lives within the new community that you now call home. That is a significant benefit.

Why deprive other children—the program is rolling out and will be completed in another two years—from the same benefit? Because studies after studies are demonstrating that full-day kindergarten is the right

direction. Talk about an investment in the future. We often talk about the future here and we talk about the debt we are uploading on our future generations; it may be a valid point, but we've got to balance it off. I think the balance is that we're investing in our children by making sure that they get the best education. I would love my son—and I can say that now, standing here, which is a great feeling—

Applause.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you. I want my son to have that best education. I want him to be in a full-day kindergarten program because he deserves it and it's going to place him in a far better position to compete, not only here at home but also globally.

The other important thing to mention—again, I hear from students all the time; I mentioned that Carleton University is in my riding—is the 30%-off-tuition grant that we've brought in. Again, it's a very targeted group, and I hear all kinds of criticisms from some of my student activist friends that it doesn't extend to everybody. But you know what? When we're talking about fairness, when we're talking about giving advantage to those who are on the lower-income side of things versus those whose parents make a lot of money, this is a classic example where we're creating that parity. We actually brought in a program that has that fairness. That 30% tuition grant does not apply to all students equally; it applies to a targeted group of students, those who come from families which make \$160,000 or less. What we're doing is we're targeting students of lower-income and mid-income families. I think that's a fair thing to do. I don't see why the NDP does not wholeheartedly approve and applaud that initiative, because it really exactly does what they've been arguing about in terms of creating fairness. I think that it is the right approach to take. When I'm at Carleton University, I've got young students stopping me in the hallways and telling me, "Thank you. We are benefiting from this. This is a great benefit because it is saving me about \$1,600 a year over two semesters."

Those are the choices that we've made. Those are the choices that are outlined in Bill 55. I really hope that the members look at the bill carefully and consider their support for this bill. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Yes, thank you very much. Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: I'll begin by extending my personal congratulations to my colleague from Ottawa Centre and his wife on the birth of their son. I hope this doesn't constitute a conflict of interest that he's voting for that full-day kindergarten now.

He spoke of a transition period. I have to say that eight years of mismanagement to get us to where we are and continuing to develop a spending habit has me very concerned. They've had eight years and they've not got it right. They've doubled the debt. It will soon be more than the federal debt, which is unbelievable, if you really think about it.

My concern is that again they're adding spending this year. They've now acknowledged that we're not bringing

in enough. We don't have enough; we're spending more. But they still added \$2 billion. They've mismanaged our economy, they've run us into the ground and yet they're saying, "But trust us. Trust us. We're in a transition period. We'll do better." Well, eight years hasn't given me much comfort, or the people in my riding. It's too little, too late.

Protecting jobs: He talked about protecting jobs. The third-largest government expenditure is paying the interest on the debt. Just think how many jobs could be created if we didn't have that size of a debt. They let it get to \$15 billion and may let it get to \$30 billion, unfortunately.

They're gambling on lottery revenue to bring them out of the abyss, and I'm fearful of that. He talked about balance. We're looking for balance. Restrain your spending. Cut back, show the leadership that's needed to restrain that spending when you don't have the funds and go after something like a legislated wage freeze, which we've been talking about. My definition of balance is obviously different than his, because I wouldn't have added \$2 billion in a year when I'm already in debt the way I am.

You know, it's a simple thing. I have a son. In fact, I have two sons, and they come to me and say, "Dad, I want the new \$400 hockey stick." My simple answer is, "No. I don't have it. You're not getting it." My friend Mr. Harris from Kitchener-Waterloo just had Murphy Harris not too long ago. On his first breath, he was \$21,000 in debt.

Speaker, we cannot go down that road. The financial realities of today dictate that we could not support that budget in good conscience for our kids and grandkids.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Welland.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the member from Ottawa Centre and his wife on their new baby boy.

The member from Ottawa talked about the government using a balanced approach. I think that this budget is anything but balanced. He talked about having the seniors—who are not wealthy; these aren't wealthy seniors. These are seniors who have done a little better in their life, perhaps put a little more money away, and making them pay more for their drug benefit plans while at the same time not adding maybe another half per cent to corporate taxes so that big corporations like banks and oil companies that are reporting billions of dollars in profit each quarter—so they pay a little bit more; or, instead, actually moving to a tax incentive program, where companies that are investing in equipment and machinery and technology and creating good full-time jobs actually get a tax credit.

This budget does very little for people on Ontario Works, on ODSP, for struggling working-poor families getting the child tax credit that is now being delayed. Those people aren't getting a fair shake, but the big companies getting tax cuts that they actually don't need really isn't fair to the working people in this province.

We talked also about privatizing ServiceCanada. I heard the member from Beaches-East York talking about the privatization. This will lead to another web, he said, like the Ornge fiasco. It will also drive down wages in the private sector because we all know that those private sector employees are not paid as well as the unionized employees at ServiceCanada—ServiceOntario; sorry.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It's interesting to me: The member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound didn't read his election literature very carefully because you were talking about, as my Conservative opponent, much higher levels of spending in health care than we anticipated. It would have been a lot more than \$2 billion this year. So maybe the member is sitting on the wrong side of this House and actually maybe got his literature mixed up.

Mr. Bill Walker: No, I don't think so. I got elected. I think I got it right.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Yeah, you can say anything you like.

My dear friend from Welland, this is an interesting idea about a tax incentive, because it assumes that the problem is that employers need incentives to hire people. I'm spending a lot of time with employers. That's not what the problem is. The problem is, they need better-skilled workers.

1630

When I talk to employers—Bombardier right now has 5,000 employees, average age 53. They have to replace their entire workforce, and they want to add 2,000 more. The biggest challenge is that in Ontario, coming out of the recession, 70% of the jobs are high-skill jobs. People don't need tax breaks to create work; they need a skilled workforce. Most of the people who lost their jobs—81% of the people who lost their jobs during the recession—did not have a college or university education, which is why Second Career is so important. So I would disagree with my friends in the NDP, but I don't think we're philosophically that far apart.

To my friends in the Conservatives who whine about taxes all the time, the corporate income tax rate when you were in power was 14%, and you didn't squirm about that. It's now 11.15%. For manufacturing and mining, it was 12%; it's now 10%. Personal income tax levels, quite frankly, were also much higher—\$12 billion higher—and you had 90,000 more low-income Ontarians on the tax rolls. If our record is problematic for you, aren't you a little ashamed about what you did over the 40 years you were in power?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: I would like to also congratulate the member from Ottawa Centre for the birth of his new son. But I worry about my son's generation as well as his son's generation, as they're saddled with this huge debt.

They lose their ability to work around it to actually function as a government. We're looking at interest rates now that are the lowest in history, that forecasters are

saying are soon to go up. Add this to the downgrades we've been receiving. Our interest rate payments are now the third-highest expenditure. What's going to happen when they double?

That's what we're looking at. They're losing control. We're sitting here, looking around at ways of getting more revenue, ways of getting more taxes. This is a government that has got record levels of revenue over their eight-year period. But what do they have to show for it? They also have record levels of deficit. They've doubled the debt. It's easy to spend and increase spending—and I think he's very much right: We as a party are very much for spending more in health care. But after we saw the Drummond report, where we actually saw that 28% of what they're spending in health care is wasted—there's lots of room to look into that and increase services but still look at cutting back some payments to health care. Almost a third of their health care spending is wasted. That's what we can look at through this government.

I quote the Drummond report: It's not simply a matter of increasing spending; you have to be strategic. I think this is not what we're seeing. I don't think it's what the people of Ontario are looking for. They're looking for our government to make the right decisions and make a difference. Just increasing spending, making sure that they feed their friends so that they can have an income for their next election campaign—I think we have to start looking out for the broader public and look after this province's wallets.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I return to the member for Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker. I want to thank the members from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, Welland, Toronto Centre and Stormont-Dundas-South Glengary for your comments on the remarks that I made earlier.

Let's talk about some facts here. The fact of the matter is that our government has a track record of eliminating deficits. In 2003, when we came into office, we inherited an over-\$5-billion deficit from the previous Conservative government.

Interjections.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: They can continue to deny that, but I think it's proven. It's by the Auditor General. We got rid of that deficit. In fact, not only did we get rid of the deficit over the next two years, but we had three back-to-back surplus budgets in the province of Ontario. We not only had balanced books but we had surplus books. As I mentioned earlier in my remarks, the big reason for the deficit we've got is because of the recession.

Here's another interesting thing: We have been going through this recovery in the province of Ontario when the dollar is at par. In fact, it's higher at times. When we talk about jobs in the 1990s and how great the economy was, this was at a time when the Canadian dollar was at 67 US cents, which gave a huge advantage to our manufacturers to sell into the US market and does not exist anymore. However, we have a situation that we pretty much have a full jobs recovery in the province of Ontario. Perhaps this

is the very first time in the history of Canada that Ontario or Canada has recovered sooner from recession than the Americans have. That is significant. I think that speaks volumes of the resilience of our economy; it speaks volumes of the economic policies that our government has put into place. We'll continue to make sure that Ontario is on the right path and has a stronger economy that creates jobs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm pleased to rise today to discuss this important topic of the fiscal health of our province. We have been looking over it and noticing the mismanagement this province has been under the last eight years.

In preparing for my speech today I remember an old fable that my mother used to read to me and I'm reading to my daughter now—

Mr. Michael Harris: She just turned 80.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Mother just turned 80; yes, she did. Happy birthday to my mom.

The story is that of the ant and the grasshopper, of course. For those who aren't familiar with that, I'm going to paraphrase it for you very quickly, just to jar your memory.

It tells of an ant who, throughout the summer and fall months, worked really hard to store up his food for winter. He was preparing. While he worked tirelessly at building up his supplies, the grasshopper frolicked around in the meadows and just played. The grasshopper only saw how beautiful the times were at the time, in the summer. He didn't bother to create a stockpile of food like the ant. Then winter came along and, of course, the ant lived because he had prepared, whereas the grasshopper did not.

Going around the riding, I did relay the story to many people because I thought it was a pretty neat story in how it relates to today. Without even prompting any of my constituents, they all recognized the grasshopper as the provincial Liberal government. It's a sad statement in itself because after eight years of the McGuinty Liberals, the parallels are all too obvious.

If I can enunciate two things in my time here today, it's this: (1) the McGuinty government has absolutely no credibility when it comes to fiscal prudence and restraining spending; (2) this budget lacks a jobs plan, and it indicates the Liberals' fundamental misunderstanding of the importance of the private sector to our province.

I am a new MPP, Mr. Speaker, and therefore I have not had the chance to witness the McGuinty government's awe-inspiring mismanagement of public funds. So in an attempt to not get caught up in the spin that is revolving around this budget, I went to StatsCan to look at the cold, hard numbers, and here's what I found.

In the Liberals' first year of having access to the government coffers, they increased spending by 8.7%, despite better-than-normal revenue growth of 5.4%. At the end of the day, the Liberals still incurred a deficit. The following year, McGuinty tax increases were necessary to fund their spending habits, and revenue grew by

11.6%. But don't worry, I'm not going to talk about the broken promises from the McGuinty government not to raise taxes. They did sign a contract with the National Taxpayers Coalition saying they wouldn't raise taxes, but that is irrelevant now, because when I talk to my constituents about the Liberals' record of broken promises, the attitude I really do get has gone to straight indignation, with the phrase, "Well, what do you expect from them?"

Further, in the 20 minutes of time that I do have—now 16 minutes—I couldn't possibly do justice to all the brilliance of the Liberals saying one thing and doing another. However, the point I do want to drive home is that the McGuinty government has never been able to pull back spending.

After the first wave of tax increases and an 11.6% increase in revenue, what do you think the Liberals did? Do you think they took the lesson of the ant and paid down some debt, or kept the province's finances at a reasonable level? Or did the McGuinty Liberals behave like the grasshopper and continue frolicking in the meadow on the taxpayer's tab? I think everyone knows the answer in their gut, but I also have the proof, and that is the 6.8% increase in spending the Liberals incurred the following year. This pattern of out-of-control spending has persisted for the last eight years. Program spending under the Liberal government has grown from about \$60 billion to \$120 billion.

The McGuinty government, in true fashion like themselves, likes to blame everybody and everything under the sun for Ontario's precarious fiscal outlook. For instance, the Minister of Finance has cited the recession as one of the big reasons the province finds itself in such a fiscal mess. He claims that big spending was necessary during the downturn to avoid a catastrophe, but given the fact that the McGuinty government increased spending by nearly 50% in the four years they were in power before the recession, it would appear that they also believe that big government spending is necessary during good economic times. Now, if you believe in increasing spending during good economic times and believe in increasing spending in bad economic times, how can you possibly believe in fiscal restraint?

1640

In 2003, McGuinty promised to—and I'm going to quote—"make sure the debt goes in one direction only: down." Again, I'm not going to focus on the broken promises because it's something I've come to expect, but I do want to say that whatever rationalization the McGuinty government makes, the fact remains that from 2003 to 2007 Ontario experienced overall real GDP growth of 9.4%. During this time of economic prosperity, did the McGuinty government behave like the ant and take the opportunity to reduce spending and pay down the debt? Of course not. The McGuinty Liberals completely dismissed their pledge and grew the provincial debt.

Now the McGuinty government has come to the Ontario people and said, "Don't worry. We have a plan to

balance the budget." They call it a restraint budget. Well, I have a theory: I don't think the Minister of Finance understands the meaning of the word "restraint." I think he must speak another language than the rest of Ontarians. After all, he's never exercised restraint before, and this budget actually increases spending in 14 of 24 departments and by \$2 billion overall. I'd like to know where the Minister of Finance bought the dictionary, because his definition of "restraint" is definitely not the same definition I have. Rather than calling this a restraint budget, it is more appropriate to call it the 30-30-30 budget.

In it, the McGuinty Liberals neglect to take the necessary steps to balance the budget. If we stay on the path they have laid out for us, Ontario's deficit will hit \$30 billion by 2017. That's the first 30.

As you're already aware, under the McGuinty government, the provincial debt has doubled, at a level that took 23 Premiers before him to accumulate. McGuinty did it, doubled it, in eight years. If this trend continues, by 2017 the debt load of this province will reach \$400 billion. This works out to just over \$30,000 for every man, woman and child in this province. That's the second 30.

The first two 30s are confined to the provincial budget, but as we know, the fiscal decisions made by the government have a large impact on our economy. As we have tirelessly pointed out, this budget has no jobs plan. There are 600,000 people unemployed in this province, and the government seems to want to continue on the way that got us into the predicament. Not only will this budget not get people back to work; its tax provisions will result in 30,000 private sector jobs being lost, and that is the final 30.

Despite all this, the Liberals are trying to sell this budget as their cure, their tough medicine that will send us down the road to a balanced budget and prosperity. It is no doubt the reason that the Liberals titled their budget Strong Action for Ontario, and yet when we get into the details, there's nothing all that tough or strong about it. The McGuinty government's favourite tactic is, promise to take action tomorrow without having to take real action today.

I think one of the problems is that the Minister of Finance just isn't understanding finance. For instance, up until yesterday, the government was very adamant about cutting the so-called subsidies to the horse racing industry. When you use the term "subsidy," this sounds like a very reasonable thing to do. After all, a subsidy uses money collected through taxes and puts it forward to some program or business. If, in fact, the government is paying the horse industry a subsidy, cutting it would enhance the province's fiscal position. But I have just one question for the Minister of Finance: Does the government use tax revenue to subsidize the horse industry through the slots-at-racetracks program? The answer is no. I would hope the government realizes this, because the agreement between the OLG and the horse industry is very clear. The horse industry does not receive a dime until someone inserts a coin into a slot machine located at

their track. This is not a subsidy; it's actually a revenue-sharing agreement.

I'm sure the minister will tell me he has made some responsible concessions. The reason I bring this up is because before the budget was released, the Minister of Finance made the slots-at-raceways program a very big and public issue. Given the amount of time he has dedicated to talking about it, one would be forgiven for thinking that this one measure in itself might balance the budget.

He tried using an example of how the government was going to prioritize health care and education over less pertinent items. In all his tough talk, the minister failed to mention how he would make up the \$1 billion in profit the government receives from the program. That's right. One program, the slots-at-racetracks program, is not a subsidy, but it actually is providing \$1 billion that is used to fund essential services like health care and education.

This is our Minister of Finance: someone who doesn't know the difference between an inflow and an outflow, a subsidy from a revenue-sharing agreement. This is the man in charge of the province's finances, a man who would cut a revenue source that provides \$1 billion each year just because he doesn't know the definition of the word "subsidy." It's either that or all the minister's talk of horse racing was less about actual finance but instead a political game he was playing to stick it to rural Ontario.

Speaking of which, I come from rural Ontario, and my constituents have also been telling me during this process that they want answers to Ornge. They want us to have a select committee on Ornge. We have motioned it in this House. It's the will of the House, and the Minister of Health is refusing to call a select committee. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my constituents, I move to adjourn the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Yurek has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1647 to 1717.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would ask that the members please take their seats.

Mr. Yurek has moved the adjournment of the debate.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing while you're counted by the table.

You may take your seats.

All those opposed to the motion will please rise and remain standing while you're counted by the table staff.

You may take your seats.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 24; the nays are 34.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I declare the motion lost.

I now return to the member for Elgin–Middlesex–London, who still has the floor.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Thank you, Speaker. It is clear that this McGuinty government loves to spend money. It's the nature of their expenditures that is alarming. Hiring public sector workers and paying them more for their service is a fixed structural cost. That means whether the economy expands or contracts, this government is on the hook for these costs.

The McGuinty government loves to blame the recent recession for Ontario's fiscal situation, but the reality is that their irresponsibility and priority of pandering and caving to public sector unions' demands has put Ontario in an untenable position.

I don't blame the McGuinty government for not predicting the recession of 2008. What I am blaming them for is not recognizing that recessions happen, and the less bloated a government's budget is, the better it will weather a downturn. A province that has its finances in order doesn't have to worry about a possible downgrade on its debt, yet exactly that is what we are facing today.

After eight years of enriching their most loyal campaign supporters, the public sector unions, at the expense of the rest of Ontario, they now think they have the ability to work with the unions and negotiate a freeze. What's even more interesting, but should be no surprise to anybody, is that the McGuinty government has said this before.

In the 2010-11 budget, the government vowed to crack down on public sector compensation. While the Minister of Finance tactically avoided using the words "wage freeze," he did say, "We will not fund any increases in overall compensation as those agreements get renegotiated. That's an important point to bear in mind. We expect our ... partners to bargain responsibly so that, together, we can do our part to protect schools and hospitals." That quote bears striking similarities to the rhetoric we're currently hearing from the minister. The minister has recently said that he wants to take a fair and balanced approach to collective bargaining. Essentially, the minister is saying the same thing he said two years ago.

How did his previous commitment pan out? At a time when families were out of work and taking pay cuts, the public sector, on average, received a compensation increase of 1.8%. This compares to an inflation rate of only 1% that year. That is hardly the tough medicine this province requires. But beyond that, it reflects the government's inability to keep their word and follow through. Maybe they were unwilling or maybe they were unable. Either way, it belies the credibility of the Liberal Party. And their record provides no comfort.

Over the McGuinty government's tenure, we've seen a pattern of spending, then taxing, then borrowing and then spending some more. At no point during the last eight years did the government attempt restraint. At no point during the last eight years did the government think ahead. And at no point during the last eight years did the government treat our tax dollars with the respect they

deserve. No. In the last eight years, the government continued to ask for more of our money through measures like eliminating scheduled income tax cuts, implementing the health tax, the gas tax, the HST, the electronics tax, small business taxes—I could go on and on.

They have taken this money and proceeded to waste it on scandals like eHealth and Ornge, which brings me back to what my constituents have been telling me: We want the government to follow the will of the House. We want a select committee on Ornge. We want the government—the House leader—to come forward and start the select committee on Ornge. Mr. Speaker, I move to adjourn the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Yurek has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say “aye.”

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be another 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1723 to 1753.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Will the members please take their seats?

Mr. Yurek has moved the adjournment of the House.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing so as to be counted by the table.

All those opposed to the motion will please rise and remain standing while you’re counted by the table.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 45; the nays are 1.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for London—Fanshawe has a point of order, I understand.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thank you, Speaker. I have a point of order for April 30, 2012, page 1940. The sentence: “Simply put, the relationship between people, government and business has come to be one-sided.” The word “people” should be removed from that paragraph.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I appreciate your point of clarification and correcting your record.

The member for London—Fanshawe on a point of order.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It’s important to admit when you have mistakes and correct them, so that’s what it’s all about. Lessons should be learned in the House from my example.

Anyway, on a more serious note, on April 16, 2012, page 1608, the sentence read, “it’s about affordability overall, that we have to make sure it’s coming out of our pockets.” It should be corrected to “and we have to make sure that rents are affordable, because it is coming out of people’s pockets.”

Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very, very much. I appreciate it, and I appreciate the patience of all members of the House while the member did her point of order.

This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1756.

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Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
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Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
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Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
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of Ontario**

First Session, 40th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 40^e législature

**Official Report
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(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 8 May 2012

Mardi 8 mai 2012

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Greffière
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 8 May 2012

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 8 mai 2012

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO ELECTRICITY SYSTEM OPERATOR ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LA SOCIÉTÉ D'EXPLOITATION DU RÉSEAU D'ÉLECTRICITÉ DE L'ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 3, 2012, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 75, An Act to amend the Electricity Act, 1998 to amalgamate the Independent Electricity System Operator and the Ontario Power Authority, to amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 and to make complementary amendments to other Acts / *Projet de loi 75, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur l'électricité pour fusionner la Société indépendante d'exploitation du réseau d'électricité et l'Office de l'électricité de l'Ontario, modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario et apportant des modifications complémentaires à d'autres lois.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I will be sharing some time with—
Applause.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Well, thank you. Thank you, House leader.

I will be sharing some of the time with my deputy critic from Huron-Bruce.

Speaker, I rise today to address the second reading of the Ontario Electricity System Operator Act, 2012, which amends the Electricity Act to allow for the merger of the Independent Electricity System Operator and the Ontario Power Authority.

Upon first reading last week, I expressed my doubts about the claims regarding the anticipated savings the minister expects to achieve through this legislation and said that it would actually do little to address the real problems within Ontario's electricity sector. This bill merely tinkers with the edges, and it certainly doesn't bring any relief to Ontario families, seniors or small businesses.

But now, as I have had time to digest the full scope of Bill 75, it is my opinion that not only is this a very bad

bill, but there are very ugly aspects, as it strips a great deal of information that is public now, and only seems to enhance the culture of secrecy this government has become famous for.

This legislation is a \$25-million excuse to put more power in the hands of the minister and put the minister and his closely guarded agency above scrutiny. We all know how that has played out with regard to the Samsung deal and the Ornge scandal, and we know about the Ontario Power Authority when it comes to being less than transparent and cooperative. For example, we're still waiting to see what the costs are, related to the cancellation of both the Oakville and Mississauga power plants, which, some have estimated, put it in the billion-dollar range.

I'd like to get back to some of the comments the minister made in his opening remarks on second reading of Bill 75, Speaker, but first I'd like to take us on a little trip down memory lane. Sitting in the mayor's chair in North Bay for seven years afforded me plenty of opportunity to interact with provincial politicians. I raised an eyebrow a few years ago when I first heard an MPP use the expression "dirty coal" at a non-energy announcement. Then I noticed that each Liberal MPP had worked that phrase into their speeches regardless of the topic. As a lifelong marketing executive, I quickly realized they were trying to deflect the fact that it was the Conservatives who actually announced the closing of coal plants in Ontario. The Liberals in fact have failed to ever close a coal plant, but it makes a great sound bite, and the Liberals continue to suggest that wind and solar have replaced coal, something not even one person in the energy sector would ever agree to. We'll talk about that a bit later. But this facade that wind and solar will replace coal paved the way at that time for a new program entitled the Green Energy Act.

Now, Speaker, the stated purpose was to "green" Ontario's energy sector through conservation and renewable energy generation, an admirable goal nonetheless. To ensure the GEA promotes the desires of the alternative power industry ahead of the needs of Ontario businesses, electricity consumers and families, the government removed all municipal planning powers over the development of renewable energy generation. Now, we have one of these that's starting in my own riding of Nipissing, Speaker, in the community of Powassan, just south of North Bay. The council there has seen exactly how their hands are tied, but again, we'll talk a bit about that in a moment.

Speaker, when you neutralize the municipality, which is the public's only forum to fight a rezoning; when you toss around phrases like "dirty coal," which stifles naysayers; and put a green label on it, which minimizes the opposition, then you've got a perfect storm for procedural abuses, failed fiscal oversight and a gross misuse of taxpayer dollars.

I've spent the last seven months meeting with industry stakeholders from all sides and from every aspect of energy production. I've been assessing the Ontario energy sector for these last seven months, and it will be no surprise to anyone who pays a hydro bill that I believe the Green Energy Act to be a complete and utter disaster.

So how did we get here, Speaker? Well, communities have been forced to accept wind and solar farms, which are paid some of the highest subsidies in the world to generate power the province simply does not need. Then we pay the US and Quebec hundreds of millions of dollars to take our excess power, so energy prices skyrocket and force companies to close or move. The more companies move away, the less demand we have and the more surplus energy we pay to export and the endless downward spiral continues.

This government continued the Green Energy Act with the stated purpose being to "green" Ontario's energy through conservation and renewable generation. To achieve this, Speaker, the government removed—I repeat, removed—all local municipal planning powers over development of renewable projects.

But the real reason wasn't so much to do with local city councils. By taking away the municipality's power, the only opportunity for organized public hearings was also removed, and that is the underlying reason and that's the real shame in all of this. So while a community may need a public zoning meeting to site a Tim Hortons, for instance, none is required to put a 500-foot-high steel wind turbine almost immediately next door.

0910

The Liberals then also introduced the FIT subsidy, which pays unbelievably high fees to wind and solar producers—

Interjection.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: It's a very good deal on the receiving end. Our leader, Tim Hudak, calls it the new gold rush, and I believe he's incredibly accurate and insightful in calling it the new gold rush.

But the Liberals also granted wind and solar producers guaranteed access to the electric grid, and that's where the real problem started. So not only do they pay an unbelievably high price, but they guarantee that whenever wind is produced, it will be bought and placed on the grid.

To accept that energy, which often comes at times we absolutely don't need it—the wind blows predominantly at night—the government stops making some of our traditional energy. So they allow water to flow—to spill, actually—over Niagara Falls and through the run of rivers without capturing the power. Now, this is over generators that we've already paid for, generation facilities

that sit idle for those periods, that we've already paid for. We allow that water to simply spill and be wasted. They also abruptly shut down nuclear plants and allow the steam to vent outside instead of powering a turbine. So they're spilling water, they're venting steam and they're draining jobs. These are very costly solutions to accommodate wind.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's the spill, vent and drain plan.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: It's the spill, vent and drain plan. There are a couple more plans coming up you'll hear about.

These are very costly solutions to accommodate wind and solar, and I'm quite certain that when my colleague from Huron—Bruce arrives, she will give her 15 minutes of explaining what this has done in her riding.

To carry on with the story, spilling water is the cleanest, greenest, most reliable renewable form of energy. Spilling that water cost the province \$300 million last year, in allowing that water—that clean, green, reliable, renewable water—to spill through the run of rivers and over Niagara Falls without capturing it—\$300 million.

Our nuclear plants as well are not designed to accommodate variable wind generation. That means when the wind blows, we buy the power and we shut off one of the nuclear facilities, which we've done on many occasions. When you shut a nuclear plant down, much like a rocket launch sequence, it takes about two to three days to return to service. The head of the IESO commented not long ago that these shutdowns could indeed become regular occurrences, with the increasing frequency of periods where Ontario has surplus power.

The feed-in tariff program pays out massive subsidies for wind and solar contracts to produce power we don't need. This continues to drive up the cost of electricity. Costs rose 26% between 2008 and 2010. Last Tuesday, families opened their hydro bill to find a new shock, and that shock was in the bottom line of their very hydro bill, which is now projected to rise 46% by 2014.

Even the Premier knew what would happen next. While serving as energy critic in 1991, he stated, "I am not going out on much of a limb when I say there is a direct correlation between Hydro's rates and our rate of unemployment in Ontario." And he went on to say, "As the rates go up, so will the rate of unemployment."

Well, as a result of skyrocketing energy prices, the Premier was absolutely correct—far-sighted, some may even say—because manufacturing plants, forestry mills and mineral processors closed or moved to where they found cheap power.

Let me review once again what exactly happens. We pay these FIT operators exorbitant fees to make power we don't need, and we make power we don't need at times we don't need it. Wind blows heavier in the evening. It's just a matter of science, where the ground is cool. It's a long process. Nonetheless, because we end up guaranteeing to take that wind power at times we don't need it, we spill \$300 million worth of water over Niagara Falls, we spend \$420 million to pay the States

and Quebec to buy our power cheaply, and we spend tens of millions of dollars every time we have to shut down a nuclear plant. It was about \$1 billion last year. It's another billion-dollar boondoggle, to use one of our words.

But let's see what this did to one specific company. Let's bring it to a real name here, now. I'm going to talk about Xstrata Copper in Timmins, Ontario—formerly of Timmins, Ontario. Xstrata Copper was the single largest user of power in all of Ontario. With the high cost of energy, and energy being the single largest input to their cost, they let 670 employees go and moved across the border into Quebec for cheap power—power that, freakishly, we paid Quebec to take from us. “Take it off our hands. We don't need it. We made too much. We can't store it. Take it off our hands and sell it to one of our own companies at a lower price so they'll leave Ontario.” It's a vicious, vicious circle. Not only did it cause 670 employees in Ontario to lose their jobs, and cause that company to move out of Ontario into Quebec; there were about 4,000 people, by the government's own admission, in the supply chain to Xstrata who are also now gone.

That, of course, has created a jobs crisis in Ontario. We lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs in recent years, which, of course, has resulted in even lower demand for hydro. So now we manufacture—we create—even more power than we need, and because you can't store electricity, as I said, we end up paying the United States and Quebec to take that even greater amount of surplus power off our hands. We've paid them \$1.8 billion over the last six years, \$420 million in the first 10 months of 2011 alone.

You wonder, when will the cycle end? These industries are using that cheap power that we've given them to compete even harder and more successfully against our manufacturers, and as I mentioned, the downward spiral continues.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Stop the madness.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Well, it's hard to stop the madness, and I can tell you why: because this problem hasn't really sunk into the GTA yet, because there are no wind turbines in their own backyards. However, last week, the effect of wind turbines hit them in their front door, and that's when they opened their mailbox and saw that their hydro bill had skyrocketed again. So while it hasn't hit their backyard, it has hit their front door, and now the GTA is awakening to the fact that something's wrong with our hydro sector. A few more of those surprises in their hydro bills and the GTA folks will actually realize that this damage has caused them and their families great hardships.

Auditor General Jim McCarter delivered a scathing indictment of Dalton McGuinty's energy policy at the end of last year. He told us in there that the FIT program loses two to four manufacturing jobs for every green job that's created. He found that wind generators operate at 28% capacity and that wind output is out of phase with electricity demand. I've mentioned earlier that wind blows at night, when we don't need that extra power.

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Solar generators, he also told us, operate at just 13% capacity, and the FIT program, with its overly generous payments, will cost taxpayers \$4.4 billion more than the previous standard offer.

In 2010, wind and solar accounted for 1,700 megawatts, and the target for this government is for wind and solar to produce 10,700 megawatts by 2018. We're at 1,700 today; we're going to 10,700 in a few years, so the very problem that has sent our hydro bills skyrocketing and gutted our manufacturing sector is about to get six times bigger.

The Auditor General is not alone in his concerns and his realization that something is rotten in Denmark. Here are some of the recent worldwide headlines: “Arrivederci Solare! Italy Cuts Solar Subsidy;” “Dutch Pull Plug on Wind Subsidies;” “UK Solar Subsidies Slashed;” “Germany Slashes FIT;” and “Spain Halts Renewable Subsidies to Curb \$31-Billion Debt.”

Dr. Patrick Moore, the co-founder of Greenpeace, told a gathering of farmers in southwestern Ontario—your neck of the woods, Lisa—

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: My neck of the woods; that's right.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: —that the wind power industry is “a destroyer of wealth and negative to the economy.” He said that, Rick, in the Chatham Daily News—your neck of the woods—on January 5, 2012. Let me repeat that. This is the co-founder of Greenpeace. He said the wind power industry is “a destroyer of wealth and negative to the economy.”

Mr. Rick Nicholls: He said that at Ridgetown college.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: He went on to say at the Ridgetown college that wind farms are “ridiculously expensive and don't work half the time”—the co-founder of Greenpeace.

Now, let's bring it a little closer to this Legislature. George Smitherman, former Liberal energy minister and architect of the Green Energy Act, spoke out, calling for the prices paid for FIT contracts to be adjusted, and said perhaps municipalities should not have been cut out of the picture after all. Well, at the launch of the Green Energy Act he said, with much fanfare, how great this program was going to be and it could lead to a modest increase in electricity bills of about 1% annually.

He should repeat that to the 670 former workers at Xstrata Copper in Timmins and the 600,000 men and women who are out of work throughout Ontario, because we all know that the cost Ontarians paid for electricity went up an average of 9.8% last year. Without an immediate cancellation of the FIT program, look to that to continue again, as we saw last Tuesday. The total cost of power was 7.1 cents a kilowatt hour, up from 6.52 cents in 2010, and while the government keeps saying that wind is needed to replace coal, that's clearly not what's happening in Ontario. There's a reduction of coal use from 2010, but it's not being replaced by wind energy. That hole is being filled by other power sources.

Let's look carefully at the makeup of power in Ontario. First, in 2002, clean, green, reliable, renewable water power accounted for 25.5% of our power in Ontario. Today it accounts for 22.2%; that's down just over 3% of the power we use. Wind, coincidentally, accounts for 3% of our power. Clearly, wind has replaced water power in Ontario.

On the other hand, coal is down from accounting for 24.7% of our power in 2002—we'll thank our former colleague Elizabeth Witmer for that—to 2.7% of our power today, a drop in ranking of 22%. Now nuclear use is up 14%; gas is up 18%—a total of 22%. Coal has been replaced, dot for dot, by nuclear and gas. So I ask you to please quit the PR charade. Wind has not replaced coal in Ontario, and anybody who says that sounds foolish.

But now that the facts are out, it would be nice if we all tried to at least stick to the facts. One of the ugly facts is another phrase called "global adjustment." Look for those two words on your hydro bill. Simply put, global adjustment covers the spread between the market price and the guaranteed price paid to generators; as well, it pays for conservation programs. Speaker, this will be the hottest topic in business—for those businesses that survive—for the next couple of years. One North Bay manufacturer showed me that their global adjustment, which was virtually non-existent in 2009, is now \$1,700 a month. This is a small business in North Bay that makes the famous Sportspal canoes and others—\$1,700 a month. Their electricity bill is only \$1,400 a month, but their global adjustment, non-existent a couple of years ago, is now \$1,700 a month. This is going to cause more Ontario manufacturers to close up shop and move to cheaper locales, as we saw Xstrata Copper do.

In March of this year, the vice-president of PGI Fabrene Inc., John Spencer, was my guest here in the Legislature during question period. Fabrene is North Bay's largest private sector manufacturer, the last branch plant of a large US multinational. They have 250 employees and produce industrial fabrics. Now, just two years ago the global adjustment charged to Fabrene from North Bay Hydro was just about 5% of their bill. It was a big number, but not a number that caused their eyebrows to raise. Today, it is a staggering \$75,000 per month. Yes, that's \$1 million a year in global adjustment, an item that was not on their hydro bill only a few years ago.

I'm looking at some shocked faces here. Perhaps in all the spin we get in this Legislature, we've failed to realize that there is a thing now called global adjustment, and we have a company in North Bay that's paying \$1 million a year over the failed energy plan. When you go home to your ridings, ask your business community their single biggest concern right now. I'm betting you're going to hear it's hydro, and when you dig deeper with them you're going to hear those two words: global adjustment.

We haven't heard the end of it because, although we know that in its first year of existence employers paid \$700 million in global adjustments, the Auditor General in November told us that global adjustment is about to increase tenfold, to \$8.1 billion in 2014. You're shaking

your heads in disbelief. I can appreciate that. This is under the radar. One North Bay company, \$1 million, from zero, and the Auditor General has told us it is going to become 10 times bigger. Wake up. Quite simply, the failed energy plan is bankrupting businesses, costing Ontario thousands of jobs.

But, Speaker, the hits just keep on coming to Ontario families and businesses. We haven't even begun to talk about smart meters. The Independent Electricity System Operator has filed an application asking the Ontario Energy Board to implement a new charge to recover the cost of the \$250-million central computer system to store and process smart meter data. The IESO says it is seeking to recover costs for maintenance and operation of the meters through the end of 2017. This proves what our party has said all along: Smart meters are nothing more than tax machines, and they have to go.

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With this new charge your government wants to tack on, smart meters alone will be adding an additional \$4 a month to the average hydro bill. That's above and beyond what we saw last Tuesday. This is outrageous. The IESO request for a monthly smart meter charge is for 81 cents for eligible customers. That's the extra charge. On top of that, they need a buck and a half a month for the local utilities to start to charge to recover the initial smart meter installation, and 85 cents extra now to read a meter. In the city of North Bay, it used to cost 64 cents to read a meter the old way, when the meter reader would go to each household—64 cents a pop. Today it costs \$1.75 with the new electronic smart meter system. So compared to having someone manually read it, get ready for another 85 cents a month. And then you need 90 cents a bill to maintain the towers and controllers that are needed to read those smart meters. All in, we're in for another \$50 a year on everybody's hydro bill just for this extra little treat. That's a whole lot of money to spend on a system that the Environmental Commissioner says you haven't even found a way to track the effectiveness of yet. But it's only money, right?

For consumers on time-of-use pricing, the OEB says that the increase is about \$4, or 3.3% of the total monthly bill. The on-peak pricing was about 9 cents per kilowatt hour, up to 11.7 cents. For those on tiered pricing, a monthly increase of about \$5.80, or 5.1%, for a consumer using 800 kilowatts per month is expected.

The OEB is blaming this price increase on changing energy supply, meaning that FIT contracts are continuing to drive up energy costs. Our caucus believes energy policy should be based on creating an efficient supply of power at affordable prices, period. That's why we're calling for and will continue to call for an end to the unsustainable FIT program that is driving up energy bills.

Let's not forget the cancellation of the Oakville power plant and the cancelling, demolishing and relocating of the Mississauga power plant. These cancellations were nothing more than political seat savers and may cost the taxpayer or the ratepayers \$1 billion—maybe even \$1 billion apiece. That bill will come due perhaps this year,

followed by the bill for the new plant once the government figures out where to locate it. This comes at a time when industry experts are questioning the reliability of the GTA power grid itself.

The path this government is on will continue to be destructive to Ontario, period. By contrast, our party will end the unnecessary and overly rich subsidies to the few in the renewables industry. Be assured, Speaker, that our party will continue to focus on our plan to create reliable power with renewables at affordable prices. Over the course of this year, we'll be tabling policies that will put the taxpayers first again.

We've seen a recent retreat by the Minister of Energy to reduce FIT subsidies and give slight—ever so slight—input to municipalities—only if they're municipalities that are interested in wind and solar. However, to us this is an admission that the energy plan is indeed a failed social experiment. Reducing the subsidies will not solve the problem. The government will still be spilling water, venting steam and draining jobs while racking up hundreds of millions of dollars in losses. Our leader Tim Hudak's call for the immediate cancellation of the FIT program is the clear solution to kick-start job creation and attract new investment in Ontario. But the Liberals have rejected this.

Last month, the minister announced the consolidation of the Independent Electricity System Operator and the Ontario Power Authority and claimed that it would save up to \$25 million a year. Again, this is tinkering on the edges of the file. As we all know, that will be a rounding fraction when it comes to the overall cost of Ontario's energy, if any savings are even realized at all. In fact, with the new rate hike that took effect last week, these savings, should they ever appear, would be erased in just two billing periods. This merger to create the OESO, the Ontario Electricity System Operator, simply will not realize any real savings for taxpayers or ratepayers.

It's quite interesting that the word "independent" was specifically removed in renaming the Ontario Electricity System Operator, because it can no longer be considered such. It no longer will be independent, given that the organization responsible for the scheduling of supply and market operations will now also be responsible for the procurement and management of generation contracts at the direction of the minister.

I'll give you a perfect example of political meddling that today we're paying through the teeth for. Originally, when Ontario's wind industry came online last decade, contracts said that wind generators only got paid for actual generation. The OPA's original FIT program guidelines maintained this. But sometime during the original FIT review process, the OPA received an order to do an about-face. Now FIT generators get paid on the power they could have produced, had there been no grid constraints. The conflict this legislation creates is that the system planner is also in charge of who gets the contracts to provide the power.

This government's inability to properly think this through has resulted in a very bad bill. Our party believes

that the Ontario Power Authority should not be merged but be scrapped altogether.

Let's take a look at how we got here. The OPA was formed seven years ago as a 15-person transitional body, created by this government to manage Ontario's energy supply. Today, it's a 235-person permanent entity, where 87 people earn over \$100,000 and the CEO earns \$570,000. In just seven years, it has burned through over \$375 million in expenditures, and its expenses have risen from \$14 million in 2005 to \$76.4 million today. By shuffling bureaucrats down the hall and creating one super-agency, this move proves the government still doesn't recognize the severity of Ontario's debt crisis. The government has claimed it will save money but has yet to show us how it plans to do so.

This legislation also addresses how the minister is to go about submitting an energy plan for the province's long-term energy needs. However, it does not set out any time frames as to how often or when the minister is required to do this. In fact, will we ever actually see a long-term energy plan?

This bill not only fails to correct a serious problem—which is the continued opportunity for undue political influence to outweigh factual evidence when it comes to decisions regarding Ontario's future energy plans—but this actually achieves quite the opposite. It gives the minister even more directive powers and the ability to meddle in everyday energy policy, which many experts in the industry have decried as a major obstacle to achieving good, sound energy policy. Speaker, this is a step backwards. Section 5(3) of the bill states that "the board of directors shall take such steps as it considers advisable and appropriate" to separate the functions of its market and operations from its procurement and contract management opportunities. But in reality, this is unlikely to actually take place, given that this bill allows for the minister to provide directive to the OESO on energy plans, including those items found in subsection 25.30(3): procurement referrals; determination of competitive and non-competitive procurement processes; the direct procurement of contracts; and the pricing of contracts.

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It goes even further: Bill 75, if approved in its present form, will strip away the Ontario Energy Board's ability of render meaningful input into many areas of the energy system, including long-term planning. Under this, the minister would receive input from the OEB on any long-term energy plan they put forward, but the OEB would have no real teeth or mechanism available to force any changes.

This legislation would also take away the Ontario Energy Board's oversight of fees charged by the IESO. Again, this is just one more way Bill 75 strips away accountability and transparency.

But worst of all—

Mr. John Yakabuski: You mean it gets worse?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: It gets worse. Worst of all, this legislation alters the role of the Ontario Energy Board and moves it away from consumer protection and, in-

stead, towards an advocacy role for the policies of the government, putting emphasis on renewables and conservation. Would the conservation programming not be best shifted to local distribution companies, who are in the best position to determine what initiatives will be most effective among their ratepayer base? Again, here is one more example of how this bill strips away the checks and balances that currently exist in the system to allow political considerations and influence to trump technical and factual evidence in the decision-making process. I think that's shameful.

You would think that was enough, but the legislation still doesn't stop there. It also removes the transparency regarding decisions and will foster the culture of secrecy that not only hangs like a cloud over the OPA but this government as a whole. The veil of secrecy surrounding the OPA is well known to anyone who has ever tried to deal with them. They have balked each and every time they've been asked to divulge costs associated with, first, the seat-saving cancellation of the Oakville gas plant, and then the seat-saving cancellation of the Mississauga gas plant last September. No one knows what it will end up costing for our government to get out of these contracts. No one knows how much money was wasted as construction continued for nearly two months on the Mississauga plant last fall after the announced cancellation and where or how much it will cost to relocate that facility. They're named in a \$300-million lawsuit already, Speaker, likely only the first of many. There's no price too high to pay for political expedience as far as this government is concerned.

And if you want to talk about the culture of secrecy, what better example than the \$7-billion sole-sourced Samsung contract. The government likes to tout this when compiling its job-creation numbers, but in reality, and by Samsung's own admission, the \$7-billion contract is to create 900 jobs. But how can we entrust more power to the minister, given this government's track record?

Bill 75 is simply a piece of rushed legislation. The change it aims to achieve is like slapping paint on a rotten piece of wood. The minister would be best served by revisiting the government's other energy policies, which the Auditor General tells us will send electricity prices skyrocketing up 46% by 2015.

Last week, as I said, we saw hydro rates rise yet again in Ontario, another \$4 to \$6 a month on average, depending on your pricing plan. Now there's an application before the Ontario Energy Board that would hike costs even more to implement this government's smart meter scheme.

This legislation, Speaker, to merge the IESO and OPA: All it does is add costs and bureaucracy. This legislation won't do anything to reduce costs for ratepayers or taxpayers. All it does is consolidate even more power into the hands of the minister, promote the culture of secrecy this government is known for and allow for even more political interference in the technical decisions and fundamentals that should be driving energy policy in Ontario. Like this minister, Bill 75 fails to put consumers

and businesses first, and I urge members to vote against it.

Thank you, Speaker, and I'll turn the time over to the member from Huron-Bruce.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: My friend here, my colleague the MPP for Nipissing, has shared so many relevant points as to why Bill 75 just doesn't make sense at this time. I'm going to be speaking in support of our member from Nipissing's direction.

Since becoming an MPP seven months ago, I've spoken quite often in this House about the state of energy in Ontario. Just to point to one example, I have had so much support prior to and actually after I presented my private member's motion calling for a moratorium on further wind development until third party health and environmental studies have been completed. It was debated two months ago to this date and, Speaker, I can tell you, sadly enough, not much has changed except that more people and more communities are coming out against wind energy. We know first-hand and we respect the fact that we need renewable energy as part of our energy mix going forward, but we need to do it in a way that's respectful to communities and respectful to individuals, and it must make economic sense. Piling layers of bureaucracy together does not achieve this at all.

Let's talk about some of those individuals and communities in our province. In Powassan, residents were not informed about the wind project there, even though it has been under way for two years. Why the cloak of secrecy? We know why: because people do not need or want the high electricity bills that the Liberal plan is causing them to experience. They were shocked to find out that the clearing of land—again, these are the people in Powassan—was to make room for new turbines. The community has concerns. The municipality has concerns. But, again, because municipal input is not being allowed in the development of wind turbines in communities, they are effectively being shut out, and this wind project will be the largest in the history of that municipality.

Again, so many people across this province are standing up. There's a writer who has a regular column in the *Guelph Mercury* who is known as the urban farmer. He's also a communications professor at the University of Guelph. I was quite taken by the fact that he has taken a stand as well. He has called Liberal wind energy "the most divisive issue ever in rural Ontario." What does that say? It says that it is not working—"it" being the Green Energy Act. The Liberal government needs to stand up and tune in.

A quote from the *Toronto Sun* recently said, "McGuinty's Green Energy Act was far more draconian in taking away the rights of ordinary citizens to have any meaningful input into the location and size of industrial wind turbines and factories."

"The act eliminated the right of municipalities to any say in the planning process." They disenfranchised local residents. "Public consultation was reduced to tokenism, the appeal process gutted."

We could go off on a complete sidebar about the lack of public consultation that is being conducted on a variety of issues by this Liberal government, but, alas, we have to focus on green energy today and on Bill 75. But, again, I stress the point that with this Liberal government—a common thread through every ministry is the lack of public consultation.

Going back to Bill 75 and the outlook of our energy in Ontario, I have to say that companies have been misled by the McGuinty Liberals and their so-called green social policies, and guess what? Our government—the people of Ontario—is now being sued, and I'll talk about that in a moment. Who is going to pay for these lawsuits? It's going to be the taxpayer who's footing this bill. Yet again, the Liberals are passing off their ill actions and their ill-conceived notions back on to the taxpayer. It's totally unacceptable. Energy is treated like a social policy instead of the economic policy that it needs to be recognized for.

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There are so many opportunities to go around the world citing different examples of how green energy has taken a step backwards, yet Ontario, the Liberal government specifically, continues to turn a blind eye to that. It's interesting: As I said, I'm new to this wonderful historic House; I've been here seven months. But right from the get-go, I understand that we have a demand that is far below the supply of energy in this province. We have to recognize that there's more power coming from the Bruce nuclear station in my riding of Bruce county and the riding of Huron Bruce, to take a larger picture of that. Bruce Power is providing reliable, affordable energy for this entire province, and I dare say that under really good leadership, Bruce Power is meeting its business goals. I ask, is the Liberal government meeting their goals? I don't think so.

In terms of meeting business goals, I need to share with you good news. Within the next 24 hours, Bruce Power is going to be syncing unit 2 up to the Ontario grid. This is fantastic news. They're walking their talk; they're making things happen in an affordable, reliable way. And guess what? We also, in Ontario, can anticipate affordable power from gas-fired plants. This is good news, but there's a little bit of sadness to this as well, in the sense that we can't even find space for probably the cheapest and most renewable form of energy: water. We have to take a look at this Green Energy Act, as opposed to adding layers on top of layers, as has been proposed through Bill 75. We need to take a look and get back on track, address energy as an economic policy, as opposed to social idealism.

We have to listen to our Auditor General as well. The Auditor General just months ago said that we lost \$1.8 billion exporting surplus power to Quebec and the United States. Hydro bills are expected to rise another 46% by 2015. These timelines are concerning, and I say that as well because when the FIT review results were released just a few weeks ago, it was mentioned by the Minister of Energy that Ontario, the Liberal government specifically,

is going to meet its demand and its focus and focus goal of 10,700 megawatts by 2015, as opposed to 2018. This is concerning, because there were a lot of folks looking forward to participating in a renewable energy plan. But where is the government now? How are they helping those people address their business plans in being part of that renewable mix? I'm telling you, it's a worry, because when we take a look at the Liberals' long-term energy plan forecast, they omit the cost of inflation, transmitting electricity to the grid from wind and solar facilities, additional costs to the surplus export subsidies and backup generation. They've omitted all of this, yet they tell people who have invested their lifetime savings into renewable energy, because they were told it was the next best thing—and where are they now? They've omitted real costs that are going to continue to drive up electricity, yet, I have to point out to you, there's a huge gap here, because they are working with folks throughout Ontario who invested their life savings into solar, and they're calling these people who cannot connect their solar panels "constraints." These people, known as constraints to the Liberal government, to me are known as ordinary folks who actually believed in the business plan and the proposal that the Liberal government had touted out there, and now they're losing so much. They're being told—

Interjection.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Yes, absolutely right. They have been misled, because they were told, "Look, if you invest in solar, you're going to receive 80 cents a kilowatt." Well, ladies and gentlemen, the public need to know that the Liberals have totally led these folks down a garden path, and it's not a pretty ending, because the fact of the matter is, those original contracts have expired. These poor people who have invested life savings—I know of one fellow from my riding who invested \$500,000. He anticipated and penciled out his business plan on a return based on 80 cents a kilowatt. Guess what? That contract conveniently has now expired and he's being told, "Don't worry. You can reapply, but you're going to have to reapply at 44 cents a kilowatt."

How much credibility does the Liberal government have when they totally go against their word? It shouldn't be surprising to anyone, but it might be surprising to the Liberal government here, that there are lawsuits coming out of my riding from their solar constraints, because they have misled, and they have not held up their contractual terms. Again, as I said, they've led these poor people down a garden path that does not have a pretty ending.

We need to talk about my riding a little bit more. The riding of Huron-Bruce—I'm very proud to call it home—is host to some of the best prime agricultural land in this province. It's also known as Ontario's "west coast" because of its picturesque coastlines and thriving tourism sector. I would hate to see tourists no longer wanting to vacation in what I consider one of the most beautiful parts of this province because of a landscape that's been altered forever and paved under concrete.

The Liberal vision is very unique for my riding. Out of the 9,000 industrial wind turbines that have been proposed as the number needed to generate the 10,700 megawatts, out of those 10,000 turbines needed to realize that multitude of megawatts, 1,800 under the Liberal vision will find their way to Ontario's most prime agricultural land and Ontario's most beautiful west coast under the Liberal watch.

Interjection.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: And it's absolutely shameful. The sad reality is, no one's had a voice in this exercise. No one has been able to stand up and say, "Yes, we're interested in this. Let's pursue it in an economic way that makes sense."

The sad reality is, municipal governments and farm organizations are now calling for the Liberal government to act in the best interests of its citizens and put a moratorium on wind and solar projects. As I said, I've had tremendous support for them. Their asks are very similar to my private member's motion that got voted down. Again, these folks are looking for proper health and economic studies to be done to determine the long-term ramifications on individuals, communities and our economy. We all, everyone in Ontario, have a vested interest in doing this right.

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture, the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, the National Farmers Union, the Perth dairy producer committee and over 80 municipalities have all taken a stand and asked the government to take a sober second look at what the Green Energy Act is doing to rural Ontario.

In terms of rural Ontario, we also boast of wonderful access. Some of that access is realized through airports, and that could be another whole sidebar conversation in terms how the Liberal government is imposing their industrial wind turbines and nobody has a say. A true example is cited just recently in the Collingwood area. Turbines are going to make it unsafe for pilots to enter that air zone—totally unacceptable, totally shameful. Where is the access for that airport to contribute and say, "Look, Liberal government, enough is enough. Let us have some say in this so that we can plan together."

Interjection.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Yeah, maybe that's why they're restricting the airspace, perhaps. Yes, maybe only the Ornge helicopters can land there, as suggested by my colleague from Renfrew.

But I can tell you as well that this issue is not isolated to Collingwood. The folks in Kincardine are very concerned. Their airport is proposed to be surrounded by 90 turbines. Again, Kincardine, Ontario's west coast, a huge area that generates tens of thousands of jobs: That whole area is going to be constrained. There will be another constraint under the Liberal watch as 90 turbines surround that Kincardine airport.

Ladies and gentlemen, this type of action is not acceptable. You know, when we think about addressing the electricity issue in this province, layering the Ontario Power Authority on top of the Independent Electricity

System Operator just doesn't make sense at all. We need to be focused on jobs. We need to be focused on righting this economy, as opposed to clouding the issue by piling layer of bureaucracy on top of layer of bureaucracy.

I just have to shake my head, because it's so frustrating that we're just not breaking through. There are a lot of reasonable people who have ideas on how to move forward in terms of renewable energy for Ontario, but sadly, it seems like the Liberal stake is in the sand and they're not swaying from it. Actually, some folks will suggest that after Ornge, the Green Energy Act is probably the next big scandal to be addressed by this province.

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I have to mention that this government's recent FIT review was a little bit of a misnomer, because it really didn't say much at all. It did not provide any relief for families who work hard every day only to come home, terrified to open their hydro bill. Ladies and gentlemen, in the winter I stood up and spoke to the fact that, "Thank goodness for United Way." United Way kept the lights and the heat on in so many homes in my riding of Huron-Bruce, and I really appreciate what they do. But sadly, now that winter has passed, my constituency offices in Kincardine and Blyth are being inundated with phone calls by people who are losing their hydro.

People need to wake up in the Liberal government and realize we can't afford this scheme any longer. They need to do the right thing. It's so frustrating, Madam Speaker. I have to stay focused on my notes or I just shake my head. It's really, really so sad.

I want to come back to the FIT review. The first line of the FIT review document states, "Since its launch in 2009, the FIT program has helped create certainty in Ontario's economy, attract new investment, spur jobs and economic benefits for communities, and support a healthier future for all Ontarians." Really? That is one of the first lines out of the FIT review. Really and truly, ladies and gentlemen, I have to ask the minister, how is that working out for him? Because I know from the folks I'm hearing from in my riding, truth be known, this statement is absolutely not true.

We need to focus on jobs and our economy. This Bill 75 does not make sense and we just can't support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd just like to say that this whole hydro debacle has been going on for years. I think it all started in 1999 under a certain government at the time, when they deregulated hydro. That's when all the trouble started, when they got the middlemen in here.

I remember Stoney Creek hydro back even as far as Hurricane Hazel. We were one of the first hydros back online. We had the cheapest hydro in Ontario. Welland and Stoney Creek had the cheapest hydro in the whole province. We had excellent hydro; we had our own Stoney Creek hydro. We weren't involved in this—bigger is not better, folks. When we all deregulated this stuff and we all let these other people in, and now we're

doing Samsung, we're doing everyone else—believe me, folks, Niagara Falls has been there a long time. We had Niagara Falls; we had one of the best hydro providers in the world. And when this government at the time deregulated, it was the worst thing you did to this province, and you guys continued it. I'll tell you right now, we've had nothing but escalating prices, escalating jobs, lots more CEOs. We had one guy, and one guy on our council, who handled hydro in Stoney Creek, and it ran efficiently. It was fantastic.

You go to London, England. They now have boroughs. They've gone back to the boroughs system.

Interjections.

Mr. Paul Miller: Would you like to speak, John?

They've gone back to the boroughs system. They've got 100,000 people now. They went back from two million to 100,000. They went back to boroughs because smaller is better.

What we've done in this province is we've created a big corporate monster with all kinds of fingers in the pie, and that's why we're in trouble. Why don't we go back to the days when common sense ruled supreme in this province? It doesn't reign supreme in this province.

I can honestly tell you that I've watched this mess develop for the last 25 years. Where are we today? In a big debacle, a big mess. Who caused it?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Mr. Reza Moridi: It's a pleasure to rise in this House and contribute to the debate on Bill 75. Madam Speaker, what Bill 75 does is basically merge the two Ministry of Energy agencies: the Independent Electricity System Operator and the Ontario Power Authority. The Independent Electricity System Operator is responsible for the operation of our electricity system, and the OPA, or Ontario Power Authority, is responsible for the planning of our electricity system. So this merger or this amalgamation will bring these two agencies together and will create more coordination among the two agencies. Also, it will increase the efficiency and operation of these two agencies and it will eliminate overlaps, which do exist among these two agencies. Also, it will bring a more coordinated approach to the management and operation of the electricity system in Ontario. All of that will simplify the whole process for small and large consumers of electricity in the province of Ontario. As a result of all this amalgamation, the taxpayers are going to save about \$25 million.

The IESO—Independent Electricity System Operator—and OPA have been created by legislation of this House. That's why the amalgamation of the two agencies requires legislation of this House as well. That's what we are here today talking about, debating this bill, Madam Speaker. The IESO and OPA have brought an adviser who will help them to do amalgamation and the merger process.

There are some key features in this legislation, Madam Speaker. I'm just going to briefly—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Sorry. Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's a privilege. First of all, I want to thank my colleagues from Nipissing and Huron—Bruce for the incredible work that they put in with regard to this particular project. We pride ourselves, the PC government, as being the wallet-watchers for Ontario families and businesses, and one of the things I've learned in life is that when you mess up, you fess up. And do you know what? This government has messed up, but on the other hand, rather than fess up and admit that they've made mistakes, they're now lowering payout rates for solar. To me, that's their backhanded way of saying, "We messed up, but we'll never come forward and really admit that."

We look further at this and we take a look at the impact of high energy costs and what that's creating. I'll tell you what it's creating: It's creating unemployment. We heard from my esteemed colleague from Nipissing how companies in his riding are in fact leaving Ontario, but they're leaving Ontario in the Chatham—Kent—Essex area as well. And do you know what? When companies leave, that creates unemployment and that puts a severe stress on the social assistance programs in that particular area. That, to me, is a huge concern.

The Liberals talk about dirty coal. All this subsidy that I'm hearing—to me, that's dirty money. That's what they're doing. They're paying out. They're paying off people. They've paid millions to have other areas take our excess energy; green energy, wind and solar used first so that nuclear must be released. Here's my concern with that: What's the impact on our nuclear power when, in fact, they have to use the solar and the wind first? Because to lower those generators and raise them back up again—what's the impact? That's going to cause stress. Then what's the overall impact and cost to our taxpayers?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I want to say, I had the pleasure of listening to the entire address of my colleagues from Nipissing and Huron—Bruce, and they got it right. The problem is, the folks that are on the governing side don't have it right, and every time we make a good, reasoned suggestion to this government, they dismiss it out of hand. Why? Because it doesn't fit with their governing plan, their narrative.

I like what my colleague said about the fact that they spill cheap, reliable, renewable water power, they vent steam at our nuclear plants and it drains jobs in the province of Ontario. I call that the spill, vent and drain plan of the Dalton McGuinty government.

At the end of the day, as my colleague from Chatham—Kent—Essex says, this energy plan costs jobs in the province of Ontario. As we cost jobs, the overall prosperity continues to sink. It is a terrible sinkhole that they have put us into with this so-called Green Energy Act. What it is is a farce. It is a system where a few benefit greatly financially—those that are on the receiving end of the subsidies, the Samsungs of the world, the big wind-

generating farms that are springing up all across Ontario that are being paid massive subsidies.

This government talks about being opposed to subsidies now—the biggest subsidy plan in the history of this province is going on under their watch: the green energy subsidy plan for wind development in the province of Ontario. It is one that has—there is no good end to it. We're talking today that there are 1,700 megawatts of wind. Their plan is to have 10,000. What is the price of electricity going to be when we get there and what will that mean to jobs in this province? Shameful.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Two minutes to respond—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): No, we've completed it.

The member from Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I want to thank our members of the Legislature from Huron–Bruce, Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, Richmond Hill, Chatham–Kent–Essex and Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for their thoughtful comments.

It seems that all you have to do is shroud things in a wrapper called green and people want to believe you. People want to do the right thing, they want to believe the right thing, so let's tell them the facts from now on.

At the FIT review a few weeks ago and in this very Legislature just last week, it was stated that green energy accounts for only 5% of the increase in electricity bills. Yet in the Liberals' own 2010 fall economic statement, it reads, "Over the next five years, residential electricity prices are expected to rise by 46%.... This increase will be due to two factors: upgrading and modernizing ... existing capacity in nuclear and natural gas ... (44%); and the investment in new clean, renewable energy ... (56%)."

They claim 5% when it's really 56%. They claim wind replaces coal when all it's done is replace clean, renewable water power; and on and on it goes. What can we possibly believe from the Liberal government when we can't seem to get them to admit that their failed energy scheme is bankrupting Ontario businesses, crippling our families and hurting our seniors?

We encourage all to vote against Bill 75. We encourage all of the members of the Legislature to consider abandoning the FIT program and the government's failed energy plan. Let's start with turning down Bill 75.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): This House stands recessed until 10:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1013 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'd like to ask all members to join me in welcoming the Myalgic Encephalomyelitis Association of Ontario, who are here today at Queen's Park, and specifically my constituent Mr. Brad Drewery.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'd like to follow up on the member opposite's introduction. I'd like to welcome my constituents and yours, the Myalgic Encephalomyelitis Association of Ontario, MEAO, represented by board member Denise Magi and the other MEAO board of directors. MEAO is a charitable organization which advocates on behalf of all those living with myalgic encephalomyelitis, fibromyalgia and multiple chemical sensitivities. They're here for an awareness day event marking May 12 as the International Awareness Day for MEAO and these three chronic, debilitating diseases.

I'd also like to welcome representatives of the Environmental Health Association of Ontario and representatives of support groups in Toronto, north Toronto, Scarborough, York region and Mississauga, and representatives of all support groups from across the province who offer support for those living with these three illnesses.

I'd like to remind all members of the awareness event and reception being held here today by MEAO in committee rooms 228 and 230, to which all members are invited to attend any time after 11:30 today.

Welcome, and thank you for being here.

Mr. John O'Toole: That was an excellent minister's statement.

I'd like to welcome Jackie Forsey, Margaret Cartwright and Keith Deviney, who is president of MEAO. Welcome to Queen's Park, and we're all here to understand your ailments.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That was a good statement, too.

The member from Ajax–Pickering.

Mr. Joe Dickson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm requesting, through you, unanimous consent to wear the myalgic encephalomyelitis, fibromyalgia and multiple chemical sensitivities pins on this very special day in the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Unanimous consent has been requested to wear the ribbons in acknowledgement of the day. Do we all agree? Agreed.

The member from Prince Edward–Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to welcome a director from the Egg Farmers of Ontario, Vance Drain, a former reeve of the beautiful village of Tweed. I thank the egg farmers very much for a beautiful breakfast this morning.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I also would like to welcome Denise King from Mississauga–Erindale, my riding. She's a member of the MEAO delegation as well.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to introduce Lauren Cripps, who is a student with RNAO and who's taking in the proceedings today.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I'd like to welcome to the Legislature this morning the parents of page Manak Mann: his mom and dad Jaspreet Mann, Amritpal Mann, and grandfather Surjit Mann, all from the wonderful riding of Brampton–Springdale.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'd like to welcome to Queen's Park today Dianne McComb, who is a director

with the Ontario egg farmers and lives near Lucan, Ontario.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'd like to introduce—I think they're on their way here—Scott Graham, the chair of the Ontario egg farmers, as well as Harry Pelissero, their CEO and former member of the Legislative Assembly here in Ontario. I want to thank them for their “eggcellent” breakfast this morning.

Mr. John O'Toole: I would like to remind members that this is VE Day, as well as, in 1884, Harry S. Truman's birthday. We had the sunrise breakfast this morning in celebration of that event.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd like to welcome Ms. Taylor's ESL class from Bishop Strachan School in my riding of St. Paul's. They're here today at Queen's Park to learn more about government. I know I speak on behalf of all members when I wish your class a fantastic day here.

Ms. Soo Wong: I'd like to welcome the parents of page Jenny Peng, who are here: Hong Jin and Chun An Peng.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I'd like to welcome Susan Monaco, a constituent. She's with the fibromyalgia group in Mississauga, and has been running the Mississauga chapter for 10 years. So welcome to everybody. I join my colleagues in welcoming all of you.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to, at this time, welcome Scott Helps from the Egg Farmers of Ontario to the Legislature this morning. They cooked us breakfast, and it was great—from the Egg Farmers of Ontario.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Mr. Speaker, with your indulgence, I'd like to introduce Mr. Roberto Ferruci—he's the owner-operator of Elliot's Not Here—whom I met this weekend while attending a trade show in Elliot Lake. It was a fantastic trade show. During this trade show, he sponsored a trip that was to be awarded. For my wife, who's watching this morning and not expecting this: Honey, start packing; we're going to Vegas.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): My understanding is, you need a chaperone.

I do want to make an introduction in the Speaker's gallery, but before I do that, I would remind all members that introductions has been set aside for time to introduce as many guests as possible, and if we could resist the temptation to turn it into more of a statement than an introduction, I would appreciate it. It has happened by all members from all parties. This is mostly just to try to confine the time to allow us to introduce all the wonderful guests that do join us.

Speaking of a wonderful guest, in the Speaker's gallery today we have the consul general of the Republic of Indonesia, Mr. Julang Pujiyanto. Please welcome the consul general. And a welcome to all the others who have not been introduced.

It is now time for oral questions. The leader of Her Majesty's loyal opposition.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Thank you, Speaker—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me; sorry. I was trying to think of going to Vegas and I forgot I had to do something important.

MINISTER'S COMMENTS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On Monday, April 23, 2012, the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka, Mr. Miller, rose on a point of privilege concerning a remark made by the Deputy Premier, Mr. Duncan, in response to a question placed by the member for Newmarket–Aurora, Mr. Klees, during the previous Thursday's question period about the Ornge file. Specifically, the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka indicated that the minister had implied that he was not impartial in fulfilling his duties as Chair of Standing Committee on Public Accounts, which was looking into the file.

The minister's remark came several days after an April 2 Twitter message by the Premier's former social media coordinator which, according to the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka, impugned his character, damaged his reputation, sought to intimidate him, and inferred that he could not impartially perform his duties as Chair of the committee and interfered with his duties as Chair of that committee.

The member from Timmins–James Bay, Mr. Bisson, and the government House leader, Mr. Milloy, also spoke to this matter.

Having had the opportunity to review the relevant Hansard and the information in the notice provided by the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka and the relevant procedural authorities, I am now prepared to rule on this matter.

The remarks by the Deputy Premier were made during an exchange on April 19 with the member from Newmarket–Aurora concerning whether the Premier, Deputy Premier and Kelly Mitchell of Pathway Group would be appearing before the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. The Deputy Premier said the following:

“That motion that I referred to to call Mr. Mitchell to committee was in fact a government motion, and the Conservative Chair of the committee deferred dealing with it until next week. I don't want to offend the sensibilities of the Chair or the House. I won't use some language, but it appears as though they won't want him at committee. Will you agree here and now to unanimous consent to call him immediately?”

These remarks were unfortunate. Although not an outright accusation that the Chair of the public accounts committee was not acting impartially, they certainly were of a nature that such a listener could believe he or she was being invited to draw this conclusion. Had the remarks been clearly heard, I have no doubt they would have been found to be unparliamentary and be required to be withdrawn.

In the House, the ability of the Speaker to act in the interest of all members, to maintain order and decorum, and to protect the rights and privileges of all members is derived from an implicit trust in the Speaker's impartiality and neutrality in the chair and in all his other responsibilities. In many ways, the Chairs of the standing committees might rightly be considered the Speaker's

designates when they preside over a subset of members in a committee.

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This brings me to one of the arguments made by the government House leader when he responded to this point of privilege, to the effect that various protections against untoward reflections on a presiding officer are not available to the committee Chair because he or she is not a presiding officer in the same sense as the Speaker, Deputy Speaker or First, Second or Third Deputy Chairs of the committee of the whole House. I disagree. I already mentioned that the committee Chairs are in effect designates of the Speaker. As noted in Parliamentary Practice in New Zealand:

“The Chairperson performs a similar role in respect of chairing the committee that the Speaker does in chairing the House—calling on members to speak or ask questions, keeping order, ruling on disputed aspects of procedure and putting questions to the committee for formal decision.”

Committee Chairs are responsible to see that the standing orders of the House are observed in their committees to the extent applicable, just as the Speaker and his designates in the House must do. Like the Speaker, they have no vote except in the case of a tie and do not participate in debates of the committee.

The implication that it would somehow be acceptable to criticize or intimidate or obstruct a committee Chair because of the strict designation of the term “presiding officer” is erroneous, and I would not want this to remain uncorrected.

Like the Speaker, committee Chairs can only be most effective when their impartiality in the chair is assumed and unquestioned. It is simply not acceptable to make implications about the partiality of a person presiding over a parliamentary proceeding, not only because the person lacks the means to defend himself or herself, but more importantly because a formal course exists for such an assertion to be made, that is, by substantive motion in the affected venue, be it this Legislature or one of its committees.

Members who disagree with the decisions of, or who have lost confidence in, a committee Chair have procedural mechanisms at their disposal. If there is no case for using those mechanisms—and there is no case in the incident before me—they should strive to avoid couching or juxtaposing words in such a way as to call into question the neutrality of a member who has presiding responsibilities in the House or one of its committees. An accusation that a committee Chair is not impartial is serious and deserves to be treated as such, and not made in an ill-considered throwaway line in question period.

Nonetheless, I do believe that the Deputy Premier’s remarks were of exactly this type—something said in the heat and battle of what was a particularly raucous question period. Tempers were high, and so was some of the language. As I said, the remarks were unfortunate, and I do not excuse them, but I also do not believe they were premeditated by the Deputy Premier to undermine or im-

pugn the integrity and the reputation for impartiality that the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka clearly enjoys among his peers in this House.

I do not find the Deputy Premier’s remarks give rise to a finding of *prima facie* breach of privilege, and again state my belief that had they been heard, the Deputy Premier would have been asked to withdraw as a matter of order. In fact, such a withdrawal is never too late.

I am concerned about the comment made on Twitter, a copy of which the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka provided to me. The tweet asks this question about the Chair of the public accounts committee: “Norm Miller, MPP, met Orme top executives in 2010—what did he tell them? Can he still be an impartial Chair at public hearings?”

The member made a thought-provoking point about this by quoting the following from Maingot’s *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*:

“All interferences with members’ privileges of freedom of speech, such as editorials and other public comment, are not breaches of privilege even though they influence the conduct of the members in their parliamentary work.... But any attempt by improper means to influence or obstruct a member in his parliamentary work may constitute contempt. What constitutes an improper means of interfering with members’ parliamentary work is always a question depending on the facts of each case.”

This new age of robust and viral social media encourages spontaneous reactions and comment on whatever trend happens to have someone’s immediate attention. The intersection between ancient but still-valid parliamentary privileges, on one hand, and fair comment on the other, promises exponentially more crossings in the future than were possible even a few years ago. While in a proper case the opposite could be found, I am prepared in the present instance to say that this single tweet on Twitter, even if it was re-tweeted several times, does not rise to the level required for me to find it was an attempt to intimidate the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka.

I therefore do not find that a *prima facie* case of breach of privilege or of contempt has been made out.

In closing, I will say that in this assembly, as in most parliamentary jurisdictions, there is a strong tradition of respect for the authority of those members who exercise presiding functions, be it in the House or its committees. The fact that an issue such as this one arises so infrequently is good evidence of this.

I thank the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka, the member from Timmins–James Bay and the government House leader for speaking to this matter.

Mr. Norm Miller: I just wanted to thank you for your thoughtful ruling, Mr. Speaker.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Deputy Premier, this morning, papers across the globe continue to run headlines like "France and Greece Spur New Era of Uncertainty." Yesterday the euro hit its lowest level against other major currencies in more than three months. As you know, Europe is our second-greatest trading partner in Ontario, after the States.

You've built your budget on some very precarious foundations of achieving a wage freeze in international and economic growth. Your own budget says that a 1% drop in economic growth will cost the plan \$800 million. Minister, you've booked into your plan \$6 billion in savings from achieving a pay freeze across the board. The credit rating agencies don't argue with the targets you've set; they point out you don't say how you're going to get there. You're the first finance minister since Floyd Laughren under the NDP to see a credit downgrade.

Minister, if you're going to vote against a mandatory, legislated pay freeze, how the heck do you get to a \$6-billion savings, if you vote against a tool to do so?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We are simply following—and the member opposite is right; we've booked \$6 billion over three years. It's page 171 of the budget. He neglected to mention yesterday he could find \$2 billion, recognizing that it's already taken out of the budget.

There are challenges, and yesterday the Minister of Health made an announcement that is a first step towards that. We are following a number of constitutional conventions as well as rulings to ensure, as the government moves to freezing wages, that we in fact are able to achieve that.

Mr. Speaker, it is important that we achieve a wage freeze and hopefully, instead of voting against those things—as this party opposite has done—in the future, when called upon, they will support the government as we move back towards balance, instead of walking away from their responsibilities to the people—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I think the important question to ask the minister is—you're the first finance minister to see a credit downgrade—this from Moody's—since Floyd Laughren in the NDP days. What signal does it send to the credit rating agencies, to investors, that you're opposing a mandatory public sector wage freeze that you've built your plan around?

Minister, here's the problem: In your voluntary pay freeze approach, looking at the settlements that came about in December and November, there were 50 of them in the broader public service. Out of 50, there was only one that was zero; 49 were well above that. Your voluntary pay freeze has been a failure. The Auditor General and Mr. Drummond have called this approach into question, as have the credit rating agencies.

Why are you doubling down on a failed policy and why won't you support our sensible and fair policy for an across-the-board, mandatory public sector pay freeze?
1050

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The Leader of the Opposition's plan won't work. That's why eight provinces running deficits have rejected the approach. His federal cousins in Ottawa did not introduce—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to ask for order.

Deputy Premier?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: His federal cousins in Ottawa did not introduce a legislated wage freeze; they introduced a legislated increase of 1.5% after they had considerable negotiations with their bargaining partners.

Mr. Speaker, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario has an obligation to pay attention to court rulings. We are doing that. We will and must achieve 0%; the Leader of the Opposition is right. We have built those numbers into the budget. We will do so respecting the Constitution, recognizing that no other jurisdiction in Canada has attempted what the Leader of the Opposition proposes because it won't work.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Minister, no other jurisdiction in Canada is in such a deep hole as the province of Ontario after nine years of your mismanagement. The worry is, it will become the Greece of Canada if we stay on this path, heading towards a \$30-billion deficit. That's the combined deficits of all the other nine provinces times three. That's the hole you've dug.

The courts allow for action in times of fiscal crisis, and when you're heading towards a \$30-billion cliff, that's a crisis. The time for action is now. You can't kick this can down the road. This is reasonable, it is thoughtful and it is fair: a mandatory public sector wage freeze, not your voluntary wage freeze that digs the hole deeper.

Minister, will you do the right thing? Will you support the Ontario PC plan for a mandatory public sector wage freeze to save us \$2 billion annually?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: No. It won't work. I'll show what happened in British Columbia. When governments rush to an end point without going through consultations or negotiations, labour has recourse through the courts, and evidence shows that the courts will undo the government's action.

The federal government is currently defending up to 11 court challenges involving its expenditure restraint law for the public service, as well as multiple court challenges over its imposition of settlements for Canada Post and Air Canada. And, Mr. Speaker, they had in fact engaged in negotiations prior to taking the action they took.

We have a Constitution. We have a Charter of Rights and Freedoms. We in this Legislature do have an obligation to move back to balance, as we have been doing aggressively. We can't accept their proposal because it

won't work. It'll fail the people of Ontario, just as his leadership has failed his party.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Deputy Premier: Sir, your voluntary wage freeze has been an abject failure: 49 out of 50. It's time to try a new path, a different path.

Minister, you've signed—for example, one of the voluntary wage freezes was with the 1,200 workers at the Municipal Property Assessment Corp., MPAC. Your voluntary wage freeze resulted in 2% increases in 2012 and 2013 and 2.2% in 2014-15.

Interjection.

Mr. Tim Hudak: He overachieved, my colleague says.

His voluntary wage freeze was an 8.4% increase, Speaker. It's unaffordable.

Let me ask you this: Does your current voluntary wage freeze apply to MPAC or are they off the hook? Is yours across the board for everyone or, if they've already got a good deal, you're just going to look the other way? How will you approach MPAC and those that have contracts?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The Leader of the Opposition is selective in the information he provides to the House. Let me provide some additional information that he neglected to provide.

Between April 2010 and March 2012, the average rate of settlement in wages in the Ontario public sector was 1.5%. The average settlement in the Ontario private sector was 1.9%. The average settlement for Ontario municipalities was 2.3%. The average settlement in the federal public service was 1.7%.

We have moved to the next level. The Minister of Health yesterday announced some regulatory changes that will help us achieve what we need to achieve with medical doctors.

We will no doubt have recourse to this Legislature at some time, and I hope that the opposition, instead of being absent without leadership, will respond and, as he indicated, work with—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A reminder, everyone: Please, when I say "thank you," that should be the end of your sentence.

Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Minister, 49 out of 50 agreements saw significant wage increases compared to what's happening in the private sector and those on fixed incomes. You just said the others have a 1.5% increase. I remind you, your policy is zero. Perhaps the minister could explain what his definition of "freeze" exactly is.

Minister, freeze means "zero." It means "no more." It says to all of us in the public sector that we need to take on our share of the sacrifice that has happened in the private sector, that has happened with average families and those on fixed incomes, to say that a \$30-billion

deficit is too much. We need to move to balancing the books, paying down the debt and building a stronger, more prosperous province of Ontario.

Let me ask you this essential question, Minister: Do you believe in your heart that somebody working in the same job in the public sector should be paid the exact same wage and benefits, or do you believe, as you have done, that those in the public sector should get 46% increases that aren't affordable in the private sector?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I'm pleased to note that yesterday the Leader of the Opposition—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's not acceptable in the House.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I'm pleased to note that yesterday the Leader of the Opposition supported the Minister of Health's initiative with respect to medical doctors. That's a giant step forward from a party that has abdicated its responsibilities in this House over the course of the last several months.

I'd remind the member opposite, as I did in my response to his previous question, that in fact the average rate of settlement in the Ontario public and broader public sectors has been below that of the federal government, below that of the private sector.

There is more to do, Mr. Speaker. We've begun implementing our budget. We will likely have recourse to the House on some of these matters in the future. I look forward to the Leader of the Opposition's support on those matters as opposed to simply walking away from his responsibilities to this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Let me point out some important facts to the minister: The total amount paid to public sector workers in Ontario has increased by 46% since 2003. That's way beyond what's happening in the private sector, families on fixed incomes, let alone the unemployed. You've given away pension benefits that those outside of the public sector could only dream of.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business points out that an equivalent worker in the public sector gets 27% more for wages, benefits and pensions than someone in the private sector.

There is an essential element of fairness that has gone awry, Minister. We believe that you need a healthy, thriving private sector than to drive investment in public services, an Ontario economy that's a leader in Canada and a government that says its first goal is to rein in spending, to balance the books and pay down the debt to build a stronger, more prosperous province of Ontario.

Step one: A mandatory public sector wage freeze to get us on that path that will save us \$2 billion a year. Will you support it, Minister?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Deputy Premier?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We now read that that party was signing collective agreements that had a larger

percentage increase than ours. Here's what the Leader of the Opposition chose to do: He and his colleagues fired 15,000 teachers, they fired 6,200 nurses. No, Ontario doesn't want to go back to that.

Here's where we differ: Our policy is about protecting teachers in the classroom because every child is entitled to the best education possible. Our policy is about hiring, and we've hired 12,500 more nurses since we took office. We have shortened wait times to ensure that our parents and all of our families have access to the best quality health care.

Ontarians rejected them before. They will reject you again. We're protecting health, protecting education, moving back to balance and putting money where it belongs, in classrooms and hospitals as opposed to—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Be seated, please. Order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All of you, come to order.

New question.

1100

JOB CREATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, my question is to the Acting Premier. The Minister of Finance has talked a lot about his plans for a government fund to improve productivity and, more importantly, create jobs. Can I get his agreement that creating and protecting jobs has to be the number one priority for any government plan?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, in fact, here's what the record is: The Ontario film tax credit, a project supported by the province through tax credits, contributed \$1.26 billion to the economy last year, representing 30,000 jobs. Training tax credits: We provided \$216 million last year, creating some tens of thousands of jobs. The research and development tax credits, which are refundable, provide \$255 million each year. The Ontario research and development tax credit provides \$135 million each year; the Ontario resource tax credit, \$3 million each year; the Ontario small business deduction, \$1.3 billion per year; the Ontario tax credit for manufacturing and processing, \$110 million per year. That is tens of thousands of jobs, in fact, hundreds of thousands.

I look forward to the details—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: —of her additional proposals—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: —to build on our success, many initiatives of which she and her—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to take a moment to admonish the Deputy Premier. When I say thank you, that is the end and I wish you to stop.

Supplementary?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew, I don't need your help.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The government has received a lot of advice about support for business in tough times. Some, including their expert panel led by Don Drummond, say it's time to shift the emphasis from job creation onto enhancing productivity.

Unfortunately, these are the same people who told us that corporate tax cuts were going to unleash a tidal wave of job creation and investment. Instead, businesses have sat on record profits, and over half a million people in this province are still looking for work. Does the minister agree that it's time for a new approach?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I think the leader of the third party wants to be careful in quoting Mr. Drummond on these matters, because he in fact doesn't think her idea really merits serious consideration.

Now, we don't necessarily share that view, Mr. Speaker. In fact, I had the opportunity to meet earlier this year with people at the Office of Management and Budget, looking at the Obama tax credit, which she has cited in this House and in other places, where they propose to give employers a 10% tax credit for any increases in wages, whether from new hires or wage increases for existing employees. They go on to look at this in terms of the credit being calculated by comparing a company's 2012 eligible wages, defined as old age, survivors', disability insurance wages and a variety of other things—with a cap of \$500,000 per employer.

There are a number of these initiatives that are part of our existing tax credit system. I look forward to hearing more from the leader of the third party about the specifics of how she would operationalize her proposal, which is seriously worthy of consideration.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Maybe the finance minister misinterpreted, so I'll just clarify: I proudly reject Don Drummond's idea, and I disagree with him wholeheartedly that jobs should not be the focus of any budget of this province.

Sometimes big problems need big solutions. Instead of sticking with the same old tactics, which we know aren't working, I think it's time for Ontario to try something new: a job creation tax credit, which would be funded without adding a nickel to the deficit and would create 50,000 new jobs. Will the minister agree that it's time to try some new ideas to create jobs in this province?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I took the leader through a number of initiatives this government has taken over the last three years, many of which she voted against. You can't quote Don Drummond at the beginning and then at the end renounce him.

She has proposed a 10% refundable tax credit for new hires in the first year, to a maximum of \$5,000, claiming that that would create some 50,000 jobs. That is why we agreed with the NDP in our budget negotiations that the

jobs and prosperity council will examine their proposal and report back by February 1 next year.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, if I'm not mistaken, this is the beginning of my third question. Is that correct?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You are correct.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My second question.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Correct.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: All right.

JOB CREATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: So my next question is actually to the Acting Premier. I ask him to actually review the Hansard when he looks through the comments I've made because, in fact, I never quoted Don Drummond in a positive way, and I just need him to make sure he knows that.

The government's job council is going to allocate about \$2 billion, apparently, in business support. This is what their budget says. They could use less than one eighth of that for a job creation tax credit which would create 50,000 much-needed well-paying jobs here in Ontario. And because the money is already allocated, it won't add any new costs to this budget. Will the minister support the NDP motion to reward job creators with targeted job creation tax credits?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The motion that the NDP put forward to the House is remarkably vague on detail, and I think we would have to understand more of those details before we can support that.

Their proposal does not create jobs without a cost to the treasury. In fact, we estimate that it could be up to \$250 million. That is not to suggest that it isn't worthy of consideration—pardon the double negative. It is, in fact, worthy of serious consideration, but we are going to have to look at the details more carefully, going beyond what was put into the NDP's campaign document that spoke of it creating 50,000 jobs, a maximum benefit of \$5,000 and not saying where the money comes from.

We have undertaken, through our negotiations—we referred this to the jobs and prosperity task force. I'm sure they'll give us advice as well as access to expert opinion on analyzing this and helping us determine the appropriate way to move forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): My apologies to the leader of the third party. Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you.

Governments are looking at ideas like this from all over the world, Speaker. President Obama recently said that new tax proposals should reward companies that choose to do the right thing by bringing jobs home and not tax breaks for companies that move jobs overseas. In these tough times, how can we justify handing public dollars to companies that aren't creating jobs while so many people are looking for work? Isn't it time for measures that support the actual job creators in this province?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We have those, and they've been working—some of them working quite well; some of them not as well as we'd like. I would remind her that we've also put forth a southwestern Ontario economic development fund. We have an eastern Ontario economic development fund, a northern Ontario heritage fund, all of which have been preserved in this.

We have taken over \$2 billion in business supports, put it into a fund, and we're now seeking the advice of a task force that will give us guidance as to how best to use that money. We will ask that growth panel to give us advice, Mr. Speaker, on the best use of those funds. We will certainly look at the proposals she has put forth. I would remind her that the kind of proposals that have been put forward by President Obama and others are already contained in many of our tax credits, many of the incentives available to businesses in Ontario, and that's why last month we created some 46,000 net new jobs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the finance minister might want to talk about the months before last month, where thousands and thousands and thousands of jobs were lost in this province.

This afternoon, New Democrats are going to introduce our motion to create a job creation tax credit. For employers, the math is very simple: Create a job, get a tax credit. The better the job, the higher the tax credit.

The minister has tried a lot of ideas that simply aren't working. Is he willing to really try one for a change that works? Will he support our efforts to create a much-needed job creation tax credit in this province?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We've said yes to that, and what I would like to do is simply review the record, because what the Leader of the Opposition said about a month before last was factually incorrect. First of all: 46,000 full-time jobs in March, a total of 348,200 net new jobs from the low in May 2009, recovering all of the jobs lost. That wasn't achieved by Obama; it wasn't achieved in the UK; it was achieved right here in Ontario, Mr. Speaker.

I'm proud of our business community. That member and her party continually denigrate business and the financial services sector, the largest employer in the greater Toronto area, saying, "We don't like them. We want to tax them more," instead of building an environment that will allow them to continue to create the jobs they've been creating.

Let's talk about the facts. Our unemployment rate is now lower than the US. Our unemployment rate continues to go down. We have built the foundations of a strong future. We—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question?

1110

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Martin Regg Cohn shed some light on why this government continues to obstruct the will of the Legislature and that of the public accounts committee. "Liberal insiders," he writes, "believe the Ornge scandal is ... fading fast from the radar."

Speaker, I want to assure Mr. Cohn, the Premier, the Minister of Health, the House leader and those Liberal insiders as well as Ontario's taxpayers that we have no intention of letting this scandal fade into anything but a full-fledged inquiry.

Last week, I asked the Premier to personally intervene to ensure that the request of the Legislature and the public accounts committee for broadened terms of reference would—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question?

Mr. Frank Klees: I ask today, given the Premier's sentiments that he wants to get to the bottom of this, will the government agree to allow those terms of reference to be implemented?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. John Milloy: I think the member is well aware that the public accounts committee, a standing committee of this Legislature, is seized with the Ornge matter. I have here the statistics. The committee has sat for 20 hours on this matter and has heard from 28 witnesses who have appeared so far. I also know that the committee is in the process of scheduling future witnesses to come forward. I have great confidence in the public accounts committee and the good work that they do.

I would also remind the honourable member that, when it comes to the Ornge file, we have had a thorough review by the Auditor General. The Ontario Provincial Police—it's unfortunate, but they are investigating the matter. We also have a piece of legislation in front of this House which, if passed at second reading, would also be going in front of committee.

There is a thorough review of Ornge that is taking place.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, it's very clear that the government House leader himself is part of that group of Liberal insiders who are hoping that this will fade off the radar.

It's very clear what the Premier's intention is. He said, "Our responsibility is to do everything we can to understand how it is that we let this thing get out from under us, and to make sure that it doesn't happen again." That is why the public accounts committee sent a motion to the government House leader asking him to broaden the terms of reference.

I ask the government House leader this. It's a very simple request. We are asking simply that the committee can meet at the will of the Chair. What is it that the

government House leader is afraid of? We are asking for one thing: Broaden the terms of reference. What is the government House leader hiding and who is he protecting? That's what we want to know.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Government House leader?

Hon. John Milloy: The public accounts committee is in the process of examining it. The public accounts committee has the tools that it needs in order to undertake the types of investigation that are needed. I would remind members, for example, that tomorrow, the public accounts committee is hearing from witness Mr. Rick Potter and has decided that they will take 2.5 hours in order to hear what comes forward. They have the tools that are needed.

The work they are doing is being complemented by the investigation by the Ontario Provincial Police, by the good work that was done by the Auditor General, an officer of this Legislature, and also by a piece of legislation that's before this House which, if they didn't engage in these juvenile bell-ringing games, would actually make it through to a second reading vote and go in front of committee for further examination of the issue.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. Nearly everyone in their lifetime will face or know someone affected by mental illness. The Mental Health Commission of Canada is releasing 100 recommendations aimed at putting mental health front and centre.

Here in this Legislature, an all-party select committee made 23 recommendations to improve mental health, but as we approach the recommended two-year review, this government has only moved on two of those 23 recommendations.

Can I please ask the minister to explain what is the delay?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I first want to commend the Mental Health Commission of Canada for releasing this very important report. I think, across all parties, we now acknowledge that this is an issue that we have to face head-on. I'm actually very, very pleased to see that mental health is finally getting the attention that it deserves.

We have released our mental health and addictions strategy. I'm very pleased that the Minister of Children and Youth Services, the Minister of Education and myself are moving forward with the implementation of those important initiatives within our mental health and addictions strategy.

I was very pleased that the Minister of Education last weekend announced 600 new positions to work with kids in our schools, including 144 nurses. Speaker, we need to

get to kids early so that we can get them the help they need as soon as possible.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Recommendations on mental health are too important to be left on a shelf. That's true about today's federal report on mental health, but this is also true of the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions' report. Eighteen months ago, members from all three parties wrote this about the urgent need for this government to act on mental health: "We are convinced that a radical transformation of mental health and addictions care is necessary if Ontarians are to get the care they need and deserve."

The time for action is long overdue. Why is the province dragging its feet on action on mental health?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I completely reject the premise of the question. We are moving quite aggressively on this issue, including the implementation of our mental health and addictions strategy. Our focus is initially on kids, because we know that if we can get to kids early, we may be able to prevent a lifelong challenge related to mental health.

We have almost doubled our community supports in addictions and mental health, and our most recent budget actually focuses more on community supports. That's why we've had to say to our hospitals, "You're going to have to make do with no base funding increase." That's why we have said to doctors, "You're going to have to work with us to protect but not exceed past expenditures on physician compensation."

This budget reflects our commitment to get more supports to the people who need them sooner.

AGGREGATE EXTRACTION

Ms. Dipika Damerla: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. As we all know, aggregates are a key ingredient that goes into building all of our infrastructure, whether it's roads, whether it's bridges, whether it's hospitals—all of the infrastructure that Ontarians enjoy. We are blessed here in Ontario that we have a plentiful supply of aggregates.

However, a report called the State of the Aggregate Resource in Ontario shows that rising demand and a decrease in supply of aggregates mean that there could be a significant depletion of this resource over the next 20 years.

Minister, I appreciate the need to increase the supply of aggregates to keep up with our growing demand for infrastructure. But on the other hand, we have to factor in the environmental cost of extracting this resource. That's why, Minister, I know that last year you committed to reviewing the Aggregate Resources Act. Can you let the members of this House know why we need to review this act?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Great question. I want to thank the member for Mississauga East—Cooksville for raising this issue. Certainly, I want to assure the members of the House and all Ontarians that a review of the

Aggregate Resources Act by the all-party committee remains a real priority for our government. That's why we made a commitment to review it. That's why we brought a motion before the House and we're pleased that it's being discussed publicly.

The one thing that I think needs to be understood is that the demand for aggregates is greatest in southern Ontario, particularly in the greater Toronto area. Our close-to-market approach has meant that much of the extraction takes place in close proximity to the GTA. The result of that, in some circumstances, has been more land use conflicts, with a growing number of Ontarians concerned about the impact of aggregate extraction in their communities. So in reviewing the act, I believe that we can work to find a way to improve the way that we balance our need for aggregates with ensuring that we keep our water safe and protect our environment as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

1120

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Thank you, Minister, for that great answer that has offered us a better understanding of the need for a review and the challenges that face both our government and Ontarians.

Minister, I know that there are opportunities for the public to participate during committee hearings.

Interjections.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Speaker, I'm going to repeat this. Minister, I know there are opportunities for the public to participate during committee hearings. Invitations to the public were issued yesterday in various newspapers and online. I also understand that the all-party committee is encouraging anybody who's interested in attending these hearings to contact the head clerk.

Despite all of this transparency, it appears that there is some confusion on the consultation process. Can the minister elaborate on how interested parties can participate in committee hearings?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Certainly, it's vitally important that—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm requesting that we race to the top and not to the bottom. I do require and request that when I get quiet, you don't use it as an opportunity to interject again. I'm serious about my challenge.

Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I'd like to think that all members of the House recognize how important this review of the Aggregate Resources Act is. That's why we're encouraging anyone who wishes to take part in the committee hearings to do so. Obviously, if you're making public presentations or written submissions, and to ensure that everybody has an opportunity to participate—our government is also encouraging the committee to make full use of teleconferencing, video conferencing and web submissions, and I know that they're continuing to discuss other opportunities to do that.

By seeking advice and insight from our key stakeholders, the all-party committee does provide a fabulous

opportunity to ensure that we all have a say in the management of this vital resource. Certainly I'm looking forward to working with all parties in this House to get the review right. This is important—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is to the Attorney General and it concerns the operation of the Mount Pleasant Group of Cemeteries. Yesterday in response to my question regarding the disclosure of financial and operational records of the group, a public trust and a charitable organization, you said, "[I]t's my understanding that some arrangement has been made whereby their records will be made ... public—to the general public." Minister, can you tell me when this arrangement was made and when we can expect these records to be released to the public?

Hon. John Gerretsen: It's my understanding that there have been ongoing discussions between my ministry and the Ministry of Consumer Services with the Mount Pleasant Cemetery organization, as well as some of the people that have been writing in about it, to basically make their financial affairs more public. That's what's ongoing. As you and I know, this matter has been going on for the last 20 years. We've got correspondence from this group going right back to 1991, and there have been attempts since that time to make the whole operation more transparent.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Clearly, Mr. Speaker, there is no plan to make these records public. After six years of inquiry, this is a totally inadequate answer. And it's really concerning because this is reminiscent of the Ornge scandal, where numerous red flags were raised by the opposition and the government did nothing but sit on its hands.

This public trust holds over \$1.3 billion in assets. It's alleged to have generated millions of dollars in profits. Isn't it strange that the Attorney General doesn't know where a penny of those profits has gone? Why aren't you concerned about this, Attorney General? You have every tool at our disposal to ask for these records to be produced. Why aren't you?

Hon. John Gerretsen: First of all, the organization is not a crown corporation. It has never received any public funding at all, Speaker. It has not received any public funding at all from the government, that is. There are methods and ways in which the groups, if they're not happy, how they can resolve this. They can take this matter before a judge, take it to court. That's how civil disputes in this province are being resolved: by having both sides present their position before a judge, and then an adjudication will be made.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I have to confess to a little bit of frustration that every time a question is

asked, it's almost as if, as soon as they stand up, you start yelling something. It is frustrating.

You may finish.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Well, Speaker, I think I've said it many times before.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Cambridge is now warned.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Speaker, I've said this many times before. There is a dispute going on between a group of people and the Mount Pleasant Cemetery people. No government dollars have ever been given to this organization, to the best of our knowledge. That's what it is all about. There are ways in which this can be resolved if the group is unhappy with the answer that they receive from government.

The member knows that. She's a lawyer in good standing. She knows how disputes are being—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question?

I will remind this minister that when I say "thank you," that's the end of the answer.

New question?

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. The government has announced that it will be closing the Thistle-town Regional Centre, a facility that serves some of Ontario's most vulnerable children—over 400 clients: children with autism, children with severe developmental challenges, children who suffer as a result of sexual abuse.

The minister said the services will be transferred to community agencies—agencies that are already stretched to their limits. Will the minister table a detailed plan showing where every service for these 400 Ontarians will be moving to?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I thank the member opposite for the question. I want to, first of all, remind her that a lot has changed since the 1990s when her party also made the decision to close Thistle-town. In fact, since that time, we have invested significant funds in our community-based organizations to ensure that the capacity and the operations of these agencies are effective to the point where it's well known and understood that the organizations and the entities that are best placed to provide responsive, comprehensive services close to home for individuals like those currently treated at Thistle-town—that the best place to do that is actually through our community-based agencies.

We're at the very beginning of a two-year process of transferring the services from Thistle-town to these highly capable agencies. I would suggest to my member opposite that she, as I do, support these community-based agencies for the good work that they do.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Miss Monique Taylor: Mr. Speaker, many are rightfully asking how this government intends to deliver the services that Thistleton provides: Programs like SAFE-T, sexual abuse family education, treatment, which treats victims of sexual abuse. This is an internationally recognized program that is running at capacity.

Here's what one father said about the program's impact on his son, "Without Thistleton, I have no doubt his life would have been destroyed."

Now that Thistleton is scheduled to be closed, will the minister say exactly how this program will be delivered?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Again, Mr. Speaker, we're at the beginning of a two-year process of transferring services into the communities. There are 15 residential clients at Thistleton and each one of those clients has been contacted by the ministry. They will have individualized treatment plans to guarantee that they are transferred to services within the community that can accommodate them and provide the sort of services that they're used to and indeed are entitled to.

The many of the approximately 400 day patients will have completed their treatment plan prior to the two-year closure. Those who have not—we're already beginning to work with those families to ensure that the treatment they receive in the communities is not only efficient and responsive but exceptional, as is the treatment provided by our community-based agencies that work hard every day to ensure that those services are provided.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Grant Crack: My question is to the Minister of Consumer Services. More than seven in 10 Ontarians have entered into a wireless service contract in one form or another and many of them have complained about confusing language, extra charges and massive cancellation fees. Many consumers feel they're being taken advantage of and they're looking to this government to provide them some protection.

The federal government has been silent on this matter for years and has only recently acknowledged that they're willing to begin talking about this important issue.

Speaker, through you to the minister: How is the Ministry of Consumer Services planning to help Ontario consumers get some fairness, some clarity and some relief from the cell shock they experience every month?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: I want to thank the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. I am pleased to be able to take this opportunity to talk about the newly introduced legislation, the Wireless Services Agreements Act, 2012, which, if passed, will further empower consumers and strengthen their confidence in the marketplace. Again, I take this opportunity to thank the member from Sault Ste. Marie for bringing this issue to the forefront with his two private member's bills dealing with wireless agreements, which provided the foundation for this new government bill.

1130

Mr. Speaker, the federal government has left a vacuum, and we are taking strong action to protect Ontario's consumers. Our legislation, if passed, will provide consumers some relief from cell shock by ensuring that cancellation fees are capped, contracts are written in clear language and advertisements include all-in pricing. It will also require consumers to consent for changes to be made to their agreements and for these agreements to be written in clear language.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you, Minister, for clearing up how this bill will help all consumers in Ontario. However, Minister, there are some concerns out there with regard to federal jurisdiction and how this bill may add extra charges to consumers as cellphone service providers adapt to these new legislative requirements. We all know telecommunications falls under federal jurisdiction, as governed by the CRTC. However, the CRTC has been dragging their feet in this area and have only recently made any effort to address the concern of consumers.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Can the Minister of Consumer Services please share with the House how this bill will bring fairness to consumers and how it will not in fact add any extra charges to their monthly wireless bills?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Again, I thank the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. It is certainly a lack of action from the federal government and consumer concerns that have led to the strong action that the Ontario government has taken with this bill to further protect Ontario's consumers.

I would note that the provisions of this legislation, if it is passed, fall within provincial jurisdiction, as it focuses on contracts. Contracts are most certainly within provincial jurisdiction. We have only to look to Quebec, who enacted similar legislation last year with respect to the issue of added costs. Our legislation is very much aligned to the Quebec legislation. It has been in place for approximately one year, and I am pleased to report that, to my knowledge, there has not been any increase in cost to consumers.

With regard to the CRTC, it is encouraging to hear that they are listening to consumers and have signalled their intent to hold consultations on the state of the wireless industry in Canada. Thank you, Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

HEALTHY SCHOOLS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is for the Minister of Education. It seems you and your government got into a little food fight with some students in Brampton. They're angry that you took away their choice. They're very insulted that you've taken away their responsibility. They say, "Ironically, the only health benefit to this policy that we see is the 1.5-kilometre walk to McDonald's." Also ironic is the \$700,000 that is being lost in revenues

to promote healthy lifestyles. Then add the minister's mixed messages that she makes that undermine her arguments to defend the government. Yesterday, she said there could be dispensation from the guidelines on certain days for certain activities.

Is this minister saying that pizza is allowed to be sold on Tuesday but not allowed to be sold on Wednesday? Is Tuesday's pizza healthier than Wednesday's? Or do you just think it's your government's job to tell students when and what to eat?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I know we're doing something right in our schools when we're talking about pizza in question period.

We know that our kids go to school every single day to learn, to build their future, to learn how to read and write, and we should be so proud of what is happening in Ontario schools. I'm also proud of students who want to advocate, who want to talk about what's happening in their school and be part of building that culture and climate, and I welcome an opportunity to meet with the students.

But our kids deserve the best start. The member opposite is a mom as well. I know how hard I work to make a healthy lunch every day, and we know better. When we were in school, many of us ate French fries and gravy for lunch, and we know better than that. Let's build a good education system, and let's make sure our children's stomachs feel their minds so that they can learn and grow.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The minister just told all those kids in Brampton that the government knows better. She should listen to those students in Brampton. They're not opposed to a healthy lifestyle or health promotion. They are opposed to choice suppression. They are using their mind; too bad that government left it at the door.

You've taken their gum, you've taken their Gatorade, but you sure as hell haven't taken their gumption away from them.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will withdraw.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Withdrawn.

In the video Our Future: Student Choice Across Ontario, a student damns this government. He says, and I quote—

Interjections.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: They may want to listen to this. He said, "We are told what to do. This is not the Ontario"—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Carry on.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The student says, "We are told what to do. This is not the Ontario that I grew up in. This is not the Ontario I believe in."

Minister, the social media generation believes you've lost touch. You're taking away their personal choice and their personal responsibility. That's not Ontario's way. It's a hashtag fail. Will you listen to the students—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Stop the clock. Thank you. Order, please.

I want to take a moment to thank those members who have decided to sit there peacefully and not interject in the way it's been happening in the last little bit.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And I don't need any other interjections when I get quiet.

Complete.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Thank you, Speaker. This is the Legislature of Ontario.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Northumberland—Quinte West is warned.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: This isn't a joke, Speaker. Research tells us that healthy food is important for students' learning. At the heart of everything that we do in Ontario's education system is making sure that our students can learn and grow.

Speaker, I'm not going to take lessons from the PC Party about what our priorities should be in education. They fired teachers. They had a total disregard for what our students needed to achieve. When we took office, only 68% of our students were achieving, and now our results are 82%. We're doing something right in our schools. We need to make healthy choices, the right choices. We need to make sure that our kids can learn.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question is to the Minister of Consumer Services. Over the last decade, condos have become the de facto entry point to home ownership. Today there are over 525,000 condo units in Ontario and over one million condo dwellers, yet the Condominium Act has not seen a single change in the last 14 years.

My office receives calls from across the province from condo owners who have nowhere else to go when dealing with bad construction, conflicts with developers, unlicensed property managers, problems with the new home warranty and more. Consumer protection is completely missing. When will the minister and this government start listening to the people of Ontario and give condo owners the consumer protection they desperately deserve?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: That is certainly an important issue for the government of the province of Ontario, and the Premier has made it clear that we are going to be reviewing that and it is, in fact, a priority for this government.

Mr. Speaker, I am certain that everyone here is well aware that the condominium marketplace has exploded over the last decade and there are many important issues that we do have to address with respect to the many issues that have evolved. That is why ministry staff are currently analyzing a number of issues in preparation for the review of the act. We will review the act with stakeholders and partners such as the Canadian Condominium Institute and the Association of Condominium Managers

of Ontario, owners, builders, renters, condo managers, other ministries and the legal community. We will build on information that we have already received and we will continue to review the act.

1140

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: In April, the member for Mississauga East–Cooksville asked for the creation of a dispute resolution mechanism for condo owners. I'm happy to let that MPP and the rest of the government bench know that my Bill 72 includes just such a mechanism: the condo review board. Unlike the current court system, my proposed condo review board would solve disputes between owners, boards, property managers and developers quickly and affordably.

On May 10, I will try again, for the fourth time, with Bill 72 and I hope the Premier's commitment here is going to show itself. Will the government support Bill 72 in second reading, and will they support hearings so that condo owners can finally have a chance to voice their concerns?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Again, Mr. Speaker, I will say that the government of Ontario is committed to the review of the act. There are many issues which have evolved with respect to the many different players who are involved in the condominium sector. Our government is committed to listening to all the different sectors, because there are so many various issues that are involved in the condominium review, and the explosion of the condominium industry over the last decade has really created a lot of new information and new issues that we really have to look at.

We continue to review the act with stakeholders and partners and all the various players who are involved in the sector, because we want to ensure that at the end, we will find the legislation—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a question this morning for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. In the previous Parliament, I had the privilege of chairing the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, with some great members from the other side as well. This committee determined that we all need to talk about this important issue. We need to talk about it in our families, in our communities, throughout the province. We also need to take strong action and give people with mental health challenges the support they need.

We've made some progress in awareness and stigma reduction, but there's a lot more to do. It's a shared responsibility, I think, of government, community partners and the private sector alike to help create better outcomes for those who are struggling with mental illness.

Through you, Speaker, to the minister: Could he outline to the House what initiatives are under way in order to help strengthen Ontario's mental health system?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd like to begin by thanking the member from Oakville not only for this question but for his hard work, dedication, commitment and advocacy on this important issue.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to be leading Ontario's comprehensive mental health and addictions strategy. The first three years of the strategy, as we all know, focus on children and youth. I have to admit, this statistic even surprised me, as a medical doctor: We know that 70% of mental health challenges actually begin in childhood or in adolescence. That's why we're investing more. New investments started last year and will total \$257 million over the next three years.

But mental health is not a problem that we can solve alone. We need all our partners working hand in hand with us across this province. These partners include agencies, umbrella organizations and advocates, clinicians, workers and support workers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'd like to thank the minister for his answer. I think all members would agree that it's a good thing we've placed the focus on assuring that patients with mental health disease receive the treatment they require, and that's even more so when they're a child.

That said, Speaker, it's even clearer today, during mental health week, that no two cases are the same and that more research is needed to help find the best methods for treating patients and ensuring positive outcomes. When medications and drugs are used during the course of treatment, that's even more important.

Would the minister please elaborate on any new research projects dedicated to finding effective treatments for people—and that includes children—within our mental health system?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: To the Minister of Economic Development and Innovation.

Hon. Brad Duguid: This government's very proud of our success in supporting research in mental health, and particularly the work being completed at CAMH. Just yesterday, I had the opportunity to announce a collaboration between Larry and Judy Tanenbaum, our government and CAMH on the \$19-million Tanenbaum Centre for Pharmacogenetics.

We know the best treatment plans need to take into consideration the specific needs of the patient. By using pharmacogenetics and genetic testing, CAMH will be able to map a specific course of treatment that will eliminate dangerous side effects, improve patient outcomes and save millions of dollars on prescription drugs that are ineffective and often harmful. Ontario is proud to have contributed \$7 million to what is really a game-changing project.

Ontario has become a hotbed of research. This year alone, our ministry will invest \$275 million in research. From 2003 to today, we've invested double what the previous government invested.

PENSION PLANS

Mrs. Julia Munro: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Don Drummond, your hand-picked economist, said in his report that “the government should make public the current and prospective financial health of public sector pension plans.” Not only have you failed to release this information, but your budget bill also fails to disclose this information. As the Minister of Finance, you know that billions of dollars in unfunded liabilities are jeopardizing Ontario’s public sector pensions. Why will you not release this information and share the truth with pension holders? What is the McGuinty government trying to hide?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: For the first time, we published that in the budget itself. We’ve also put out a note on a 60-day consultation. We dealt with the largest jointly sponsored pension plans on that. We spoke also in one of the longest narratives on pensions about the broader public sector. We’ve begun the consultation that we undertook. I expect the results of that to be done fairly shortly. You did vote against those initiatives, I would remind you, which are designed to do that.

My hope is that as the recommendations come back—and we did spell out a number of the specific undertakings around the funding of multi-employer pension plans in the broader public sector, around jointly sponsored plans in the public sector—I hope you’ll support the changes we’ve proposed in the budget. I would refer you to the budget to see, where it was based on the last valuation dates, what the state of those precise pensions is. That’s the first time that’s ever—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Julia Munro: Back to the Deputy Premier: With your failed track record of fiscal management, no wonder Ontarians are worried about the security of their pensions. Ontario’s public sector pension plans are short billions of dollars. Who bears the financial responsibility for funding these pension shortfalls? As Don Drummond said, there is considerable confusion on this issue.

So I ask the Deputy Premier, who is responsible for funding deficits of public sector pensions, or can we expect you to take the same wait-and-see-and-downgrade approach you took with the provincial deficit?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: That’s very clearly outlined in the budget. I’d refer the member. It’s unfortunate the Tories still haven’t read the budget.

It depends. First of all, on jointly sponsored plans, we are half-responsible. We’ve proposed an amendment that would make the first recourse to be a reduction of benefits as opposed to an increase in contributions. You voted against that initiative, which is unfortunate.

On single-employer plans in the broader public sector, the employees and the employer are. We are therefore indirectly responsible because, in the case of some of these pensions, a much greater percentage is borne by the employer than by the employee. We’ve proposed to deal with that.

Obviously, you haven’t read the budget. I’d suggest you read it first. I look forward to your support for the initiatives we’ve brought forward.

MINISTER’S COMMENTS

Mr. Jim Wilson: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order from the member from Simcoe—Grey.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Mr. Speaker, we’ve been waiting patiently for an hour since your ruling about the Deputy Premier’s maligning the reputation of the member from Parry Sound—Muskoka.

You suggested that perhaps the member should withdraw his comments and apologize. I’d like to give the member the opportunity—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That’s not helpful, the comments afterwards. That’s not a point of order. Members always have an opportunity to correct the record.

The Deputy Premier on a point of order.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I withdraw those comments, based on your advice, with my apologies to the Chair and to the member opposite.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank the member for doing so.

There are no deferred votes.

This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1149 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I wanted to welcome to Queen’s Park residents from York South—Weston. They are guests from Syme 55+ Centre, a non-profit community agency that does a lot of good work in York South—Weston. Today, visiting Queen’s Park, we have the president, Audrey Clark, and Violet Sandler, together with Doreen Fitzsimmons, Bernice Dowell and Nancy Rychel. Welcome to our Legislature.

Mr. John O’Toole: I’m not sure if I introduced these people, but at the risk of doing it twice—Jackie Forsey, Marg Cartwright, and Keith Deviney, the president of MEAO. I’ll be making a statement on it later. Welcome to Queen’s Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We welcome our guests to Queen’s Park.

MEMBERS’ STATEMENTS

MYALGIC ENCEPHALOMYELITIS
ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO

Mr. John O’Toole: I want to remind members that May 12 is the International Awareness Day for Myalgic Encephalomyelitis, Fibromyalgia and Multiple Chemical

Sensitivities—difficult to say and very difficult to live with. An estimated 568,000 Ontarians suffer from these conditions. Representatives from the MEAO have joined us here today for awareness events, and it's a privilege to meet, speak with and listen to them.

I'd like to welcome, as I said, Jackie Forsey and Marg Cartwright, from my riding, with this group—and other groups across the province.

The association is to be commended for its success in advocating for the rights of people with these disabilities. The association promotes access to services such as disability benefits and home care, as well as an understanding of how these illnesses affect patients attending school and indeed in the workplace. They also recognize the importance of medical diagnosis, treatment and research.

I'd like to thank them and tell them that we are here to listen and serve you. All best wishes in your campaign.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It's a pleasure today to rise to congratulate the Windsor owner of the 138th running of the Kentucky Derby—Paul Reddam owns I'll Have Another, which this year came first in the heat and pulled away, in the final furlong, on Saturday, to win the Kentucky Derby. Jockey Mario Gutierrez was riding in his first derby and guided the three-year-old colt ahead of Bob Baffert's Bodemeister and a late-closing Dullahan to win on a fast track.

Reddam grew up on Cousineau Road in Windsor, and got hooked on racing by watching the standardbreds at Windsor Raceway, and is also the president of CashCall, a financial lending company.

This is particularly of interest because this is a gentleman who got his start, who found a passion in horse racing, and ended up winning the Kentucky Derby this year.

Now that industry, of course, with the decision from the Liberal government to eliminate the slots revenue-sharing program at Windsor Raceway and other raceways across Ontario—jeopardizes this from ever happening again. Who will want to invest in this industry if there's no financial future at the end?

I want to congratulate Mr. Reddam and thank him very much for his passionate involvement in the industry, and wish him best of luck going forward.

EGG FARMERS OF ONTARIO

Mr. Phil McNeely: I wish to point out that a significant number of members of this House, according to my personal observation, were privileged to begin this day with a nutritious, protein-rich, vitamin-packed and downright delicious breakfast, thanks to the Egg Farmers of Ontario. I believe you, Mr. Speaker, know what I'm talking about.

On behalf of the government of Ontario, I'm happy to thank the Egg Farmers of Ontario for coming to Queen's

Park this morning for their 14th annual breakfast. I'm proud that Ontario is home to some of the world's most delicious, healthy and nutritious eggs, and I'm proud to support Ontario's egg farmers.

Eggs are a great choice for a healthy, active lifestyle. They are low in calories, high in protein and contain all nine essential amino acids.

We also know that supply management plays an important role in the success of the industry. It brings stability, provides opportunities for growth, and contributes to a strong economy, which is why our government is a strong, unwavering supporter of this system. All Ontarians benefit in turn because eggs are an important part of the agri-food industry and a significant contributor to the province's economy.

I encourage all members to take the opportunity to speak to an egg farmer today and learn more about this thriving industry. From someone who grew up on the farm, I'm pleased to say that there's not a bad egg among them.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will permit heckling in that case.

BRUCE TRAIL

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased to rise today to recognize the 50th anniversary of the Bruce Trail, Canada's oldest footpath, that encompasses 885 kilometres and an additional 300 kilometres of side trails from the Bruce Peninsula to Niagara Falls.

I'm particularly proud of the trails located throughout Dufferin—Caledon—including the Toronto Bruce Trail Club, headed by Peter Leeney; the Caledon Hills Bruce Trail Club, headed by Jean Kerins; and the Dufferin Highland Bruce Trail Club, headed by new president Larry Haskell.

Each of these volunteer clubs represents the people who work hard to maintain the trails for all of us to enjoy. Since 1952, volunteers have developed handshake agreements with landowners to build, develop, maintain and enhance the Bruce Trail. These are the individuals who help ensure all Ontarians have access to the Niagara Escarpment.

A UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve, the escarpment is home to irreplaceable natural spaces, endangered species and the Bruce Trail.

This year, Bruce Trail clubs will be hosting many celebratory events to mark its 50th anniversary. Recently I was pleased to participate in a fundraiser to purchase a new section of the trail being developed by the conservancy in the township of Mono called Splitrock Narrows.

It is exciting to see the trail grow and have a chance to explore new areas. I would encourage everyone to take the time this year and find an occasion to visit the Bruce Trail and celebrate its 50th anniversary.

OOSTER HOUSE

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I was pleased recently to welcome Minister of Community and Social Services John Milloy to Guelph for the grand opening of a new respite home for adults with developmental delays.

This initiative is the result of creative collaboration between Community Living Guelph Wellington and Hopewell Children's Homes, with financial support from the province of Ontario.

The new six-bed respite group home, called Ooster House, will provide respite for individuals 18 years and older, thereby assisting families to maintain their adult child at home. It is expected that up to 50 families will eventually be able to receive respite anywhere from one day to several weeks. Hopewell's Stephanie Home already provides respite services for 62 children and youth, many of whom are diagnosed with autism.

The Ministry of Community and Social Services is providing \$300,000 in urgent-need funding to support the operation of the home as well as providing one-time funding of \$150,000 in capital support.

This new respite home will make a real difference in the lives of many adults with a developmental disability and their families. I am delighted that the home will be called Ooster House in recognition of John and Joanne Oosterhuis, who founded Hopewell Homes, and their extraordinary commitment to serving people in our community with developmental disabilities.

UNION CERTIFICATION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you once again for that beautiful introduction, Speaker.

We do not have to look long or far to find abusive examples of the card-based certification policies which some parties here support. We've seen it used to completely undermine employees' freedom of association, a basic human right guaranteed by our charter.

Take, for example, two carpenters who worked for the city of Hamilton. They showed up to work one Saturday and used card-based certification to unionize all construction and carpentry work performed for or by the city of Hamilton. The result was that, of 260 registered contractors with the city of Hamilton, only 17 became eligible after that. That's the tyranny of the 6.5%.

Card-based certification is, in short, a method by which a small number of workers can coerce, force, browbeat and menace a larger number of workers into joining a union. It is a fundamental denial of their basic human right to freedom of association.

1510

This unfairness is why I'm tabling legislation this afternoon to eliminate card-based certification from the law books of Ontario. It's fitting that on the birthday of Nobel Prize-winning economist F. A. Hayek, I'll end the statement with his wise words: "If we wish to preserve a

free society, it is essential that we recognize that the desirability of a particular object is not sufficient justification for the use of coercion."

HEALTHY EATING

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to rise in this House, and in a few minutes I will be introducing a private member's bill called Healthy Decisions for Healthy Eating.

The bill is very simple. It asks restaurants that have a profit of more than \$5 million and have at least five sites in Ontario to do three things. The first one: Put the calories beside the price so you know how many calories you're buying. If you're buying a Big Mac, \$2.99, 640 calories. The second thing: If it is high in sodium, we will add a flag to that menu so that we flag foods that are high in sodium. The third thing is that it will make sure that every one of those restaurants has a brochure available with the full nutritional content of every item on the menu. That's it, that's all, but a small bill like this can have a great influence on the health of the people.

Nutrition-related health risks are high, but they are avoidable. In this bill, I have the support of the Ontario division of the Canadian Cancer Society, the Canadian Stroke Network, the Sport Matters group; I have the Association of Local Public Health Agencies, including Rosana Pellizzari, who is the medical officer of health in Peterborough, and Dr. McKeown, who's the medical officer of health in Toronto. We have the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario, Ontario Medical Association, Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario, Centre for Science in the Public Interest, Prevent Cancer Now, Disabled Women's Network Ontario and the dietitian association.

MYALGIC ENCEPHALOMYELITIS ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO

Mr. Joe Dickson: The Myalgic Encephalomyelitis Association of Ontario, known as the MEAO, is a registered Ontario charity and a volunteer-operated organization which was founded in 1990. MEAO is a place of information, support, awareness and education for people living with myalgic encephalomyelitis, sometimes known as chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia and multiple chemical sensitivities.

There are over 500,000 people in Ontario, as per the Canadian Community Health Survey of 2010, living with one or more of these chronic, debilitating and often disabling illnesses. The symptoms of these illnesses often overlap and are complicated. Patients with one or more of these illnesses often despair for lack of treatment options.

Funding for these illnesses is almost non-existent, and the MEAO is actively advocating to help secure the funds needed for diagnosis, treatment and community support.

The Myalgic Encephalomyelitis Association of Ontario advocates on behalf of all Ontarians who have

one or more of myalgic encephalomyelitis, sometimes known as chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia and multiple chemical sensitivities. May 12 is known as awareness day for myalgic encephalomyelitis, fibromyalgia and multiple chemical sensitivities.

Today, on May 8, 2012, they are having an awareness event at Queen's Park once again to advocate on behalf of Ontarians who have these illnesses. Funds must become available soon in order to open treatment centres, provide the urgently needed treatment and provide more education.

J.L. JORDAN CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a pleasure to speak about a very moving event I attended over the weekend at J.L. Jordan Catholic School in Brockville. Billed as Extreme Saturday, the event saw dozens of parents, students, staff and community volunteers come together for a final daylong effort to complete their schoolyard revitalization project.

It's an amazing makeover. However, the day's highlight was clearly the dedication of the project to four community heroes prior to the ribbon-cutting. These heroes were chosen to represent the four points on the compass J.L. Jordan strives to instil in its students to guide them in making the right choices on life's journey.

Three of the heroes were honoured posthumously: Corporal Randy Payne, who was killed in Afghanistan on April 22, 2006; Andrew Moffitt, who was stabbed to death while coming to the aid of a friend in 1998; Warrant Officer Class 1 Robert Moulton, who, prior to losing his life when his plane was shot down over Holland on May 5, 1943, piloted the doomed aircraft away from a village, saving countless lives.

The fourth hero is RCMP Corporal Laurie White, a former J.L. Jordan student, who was injured in the line of duty and is the only active duty officer to return to work with a prosthetic leg.

It was humbling to be part of the dedication ceremony with the families of these heroes and hear about these incredible exploits. I can't think of four better role models for young students to emulate, and I want to commend everyone involved with the project for organizing such an unforgettable day. Thank you.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for Private Members' Public Business, such that Mr. Chudleigh assumes ballot item number 44 and Mr. Pettapiece assumes ballot item number 46.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated May 8, 2012, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 108(f)9, the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

DEFENDING EMPLOYEES' RIGHTS ACT (CERTIFICATION OF TRADE UNIONS), 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LA DÉFENSE DES DROITS DES EMPLOYÉS (ACCREDITATION DES SYNDICATS)

Mr. Hillier moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 85, An Act to amend the Labour Relations Act, 1995 to increase the rights of members of trade unions with respect to the certification of trade unions / Projet de loi 85, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur les relations de travail pour accroître les droits des membres des syndicats relativement à l'accréditation des syndicats.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you, Speaker. From the explanatory note—you'll like this; it's very short.

Defending Employees' Rights Act (Certification of Trade Unions): "The bill amends the Labour Relations Act, 1995, to prohibit the Ontario Labour Relations Board from certifying a trade union as the bargaining agent of the employees in a bargaining unit unless a representation vote is held among the employees."

HEALTHY DECISIONS FOR HEALTHY EATING ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 FAVORISANT DES CHOIX SAINS POUR UNE ALIMENTATION SAINTE

M^{me} Gélinas moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 86, An Act to amend the Health Protection and Promotion Act to require a food service premise to provide nutritional information / Projet de loi 86, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection et la promotion de la santé pour obliger les lieux de restauration à indiquer l'information nutritionnelle.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

1520

M^{me} France Gélinas: Here's the explanatory note. "The bill amends the Health Protection and Promotion Act to require all persons who own or operate a food service premise that is part of a chain of food service premises with a minimum of five locations in Ontario and a gross annual revenue of over \$5 million to do the following:

"(1) Display the number of calories contained in the food and drink items that are sold or served for immediate consumption....

"(2) Make available brochures that provide nutritional information for the food and drinks items sold....

"(3) Indicate high and very high sodium content of food and drink items sold or served for immediate consumption....

"The bill makes it an offence to contravene these requirements and imposes first, second and subsequent fines for an offence."

WORKPLACE SAFETY AND INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT (ALTERNATE INSURANCE PLANS), 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA SÉCURITÉ PROFESSIONNELLE ET L'ASSURANCE CONTRE LES ACCIDENTS DU TRAVAIL (RÉGIMES D'ASSURANCE CONCURRENTS)

Mr. Hillier moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 87, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 to provide employers with the right to participate in alternate insurance plans / Projet de loi 87, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la sécurité professionnelle et l'assurance contre les accidents du travail pour accorder aux employeurs le droit de participer à des régimes d'assurance concurrents.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Randy Hillier: The Workplace Safety and Insurance Amendment Act (Alternate Insurance Plans), 2012: This bill amends the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997, to allow an employer, at any time, to opt to participate in an insurance plan that is offered by a private sector insurer, instead of the insurance plan established under this act, if the alternate plan offers benefits to the employer's workers that are comparable to those offered by the insurance plan as it exists under the

act as of the date that the amendments to the act come into force. To exercise this option, an employer is required to file a notice with the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board containing the particulars specified in the regulations made under the act. If an alternate plan is in force, the employer or any workers of the employer who are affected by a decision of the insurer under the alternate plan may appeal the decision to the Financial Services Tribunal.

The bill also repeals the amendments to the act made by the Workplace Safety and Insurance Amendment Act, 2008, which presently do not come into force until January 1, 2013. Those amendments would have made insurance coverage mandatory in the construction industry for independent operators, sole proprietors, partners in partnerships and executive officers of corporations. As a result, insurance coverage for those categories of persons in the construction industry reverts to being optional.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND ANIMAL PROTECTION PRÉPARATION AUX SITUATIONS D'URGENCE ET PROTECTION DES ANIMAUX

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I'm pleased to stand in the House today and recognize Emergency Preparedness Week in the province of Ontario.

Disaster can strike at any time and anywhere, Mr. Speaker, often without warning. We have seen recent examples of this after an unusually warm winter caused early flooding and tornadoes, catching some households off guard.

La Semaine de la protection civile nous rappelle le caractère imprévisible des catastrophes et l'importance d'avoir un plan familial de mesures d'urgence, ainsi qu'une trousse de survie contenant suffisamment de nourriture, d'eau et d'autres fournitures de première nécessité pour subsister pendant trois jours.

It is important to have a 72-hour survival kit, as it will help ensure the safety of your family and free up first responders to take care of those in greater need, such as patients in hospitals and long-term-care facilities.

Each emergency plan and survival kit must be as unique as the family it is intended to safeguard. For example: Families with infants must remember formula and diapers; ensure you have access to necessary medicines in case the 24-hour pharmacy is suddenly closed; protect household pets with a separate survival kit. This should include food, medicines, a photo of you and your pet and copies of important veterinary documents.

La préparation aux situations d'urgence n'a rien de compliqué. Il suffit de commencer par quelque chose d'aussi simple que d'avoir une lampe de poche avec une

pile neuve, en cas de panne de courant, et de se rappeler dans quel tiroir elle se trouve. Puis, on continue à partir de là.

To help, Emergency Management Ontario has launched a new website that Ontarians can use to prepare for different emergencies; ontario.ca/beprepared is loaded with interactive features that allow families to subscribe to alerts, test their knowledge of Ontario's natural hazards and build a customized emergency plan using the action plan tool.

Mr. Speaker, this week is also Be Kind to Animals Week. Our government is proud to have introduced the toughest animal welfare legislation in Canada. We joined with the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and other partners in animal welfare in encouraging Ontarians to look out for the province's animals.

En fait, la Semaine de la protection civile et la Semaine Respectons les animaux ont quelque chose en commun. Les animaux sont aussi affectés par les situations d'urgence, et il faut donc prendre des précautions pour assurer leur subsistance et leur sécurité.

There is even a section on the new Emergency Management Ontario website with information on protecting and caring for animals.

I encourage all members of this House to attend Emergency Preparedness Week events in your communities and encourage your constituents to create their own emergency plan and survival kit. Your support will help to build safer communities for all Ontarians and our animal friends.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Responses?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to respond to the comments made by the minister on Emergency Preparedness Week here in the province of Ontario on behalf of my colleague Mr. Yakabuski, who is our critic, who happens to be out at an event with some fire chiefs this afternoon, speaking to them.

If you look at some of the things that have happened here in Ontario in the past—I go back to the time of the Mississauga train derailment; things like the Barrie tornado; the Peterborough flood; there was a tornado in the Caledon area; and I know I've had, in fact, in my community, over the years, the Medonte train derailment, the Severn Falls train derailment and the train derailment down near Laurie's riding in the Gamebridge area—all of them created a lot of issues for people and showed the reason why we have to be prepared for these types of disasters.

I also think of one thing, Mr. Speaker, that's very interesting that happened down on Highway 402, and that was the snowstorm a couple of years back when people were stranded on the highway without the proper assistance. If anything ever was a good example of why we living here in the province of Ontario should be prepared, it was that story alone.

We take for granted; we head out sometimes in our suits, whatever it is, without heavy clothing on a winter's day and we head out to an event, wherever it may be. But what we should have in every vehicle is extra warm

clothing; we should have blankets, in case we have to pull the car over because we're in a storm or something; we should have water; we should have some granola bars, things like that; some candles for heat, because we can't let the car run forever, it will run out of fuel. Those are the kinds of things that we need right in our vehicles as we travel a province like Ontario in the wintertime.

1530

Then you think of things like when the hydro goes out. You often wonder, "Well, what will actually happen?" Really and truly, if you don't have a backup supply—you take hydro for granted quite often. The hydro is out for three or four hours and it's back on. Hydro One has done a great job over the years of making sure they replace the hydro. The reality is, though, sometimes it's even worse than that and it can be out, like the blackout, for a number of days.

I think it's important for a lot of people, particularly in rural Ontario, where you have sump pumps etc., that you should maybe have a backup generator. I don't see anything wrong with that. I know a number of people in my constituency do that because of the possibilities of flooding of basements. Then you've got to worry about also having the power to run your refrigerator or your freezer so you don't lose all your meats etc. These are all very, very important things that the average person should be aware of and should concentrate on as they live their daily lives and prepare for emergencies.

I think overall, our municipalities, working with our emergency services, have done a remarkable job over the years. A number of the members here in all of our caucuses have served on municipal councils. They've worked on emergency plans over the years, and they understand how important it is for the communities to have proper fire protection, police protection and emergency services with paramedics etc. Those are the things that we count on, but they've been put in there for a reason. Every municipality in the province has an emergency service plan, and of course they work with emergency services Ontario as well.

Overall, it's a reminder, as the minister said, by having an Emergency Preparedness Week, that we all work together; that we make sure that when these disasters come up or these tragedies come up, or even things locally come up, we are able to handle them in a very professional way and in a way that we can save lives.

With that, I'd like to say, on behalf of my caucus colleagues, Tim Hudak and the PC caucus, we fully support our emergency service workers and fully support the idea of an Emergency Preparedness Week. In the end, if we listen to these rules, if we abide by these rules and we prepare for these, we will in fact save lives.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further response?

M. Taras Natyshak: Merci, monsieur le Président, ça me donne plaisir de répondre aux déclarations du ministère de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Bravo.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Merci, madame. Knowing the risk that your community faces is key in an emergency situation. Over the last year, different communities in Ontario dealt with a variety of emergencies. We had the strong tornado in Goderich that ravaged that small town. The towns of Kingsville and Leamington were also hit by a tornado in recent years.

We had prolific forest fires in northern Ontario throughout the summer of 2011, and communities across Ontario came together to host those displaced by those fires. The MNR and firefighters worked very hard to extinguish and isolate those fires. We also had flooding in Fort Albany.

With the nature of our changing climate, natural phenomena are having an increased impact on our communities, and we need to be better prepared for them. Communities need the tools and the awareness required to deal with the changing nature of such natural phenomena. There's also something that we can do at the personal level, like knowing the risks in our community and having an emergency kit.

Taking good care of our seniors and the most vulnerable is also important. Residences housing vulnerable Ontarians include retirement homes, long-term-care homes, hospitals and group homes. There are approximately 700 retirement homes, 400 long-term-care facilities and 3,000 other homes that house vulnerable residents. Since 1980, there have been 44 people who have died from the effects of fires in facilities that are defined as care occupancies in the Ontario fire code. Residents of old-age homes are 5.4 times more likely to die in fires than other Canadians. Many residents have restricted mobility that may be accompanied by cognitive impairments, conditions that can limit their ability to quickly escape if a fire should occur.

Three coroners' inquests into fire deaths in Ontario care occupancies recommended that automatic fire sprinklers be installed. These inquests recommended to successive governments to change the Ontario building code to make the installation of automatic fire sprinklers in residents' rooms mandatory, and retroactive in older facilities.

Since 1997, automatic sprinklers have been required in all newly built care occupancies. There are an estimated 4,300 care and treatment facilities in Ontario that don't have automatic fire sprinklers. That's from the Office of the Fire Marshal of Ontario.

If the Liberal government is serious about protecting the elderly, it will pass a private members' bill forcing privately owned retirement homes to install the sprinklers that we know save lives.

Ontario's building code requires retirement homes built from 1998 and on to have automatic sprinklers. It does not cover retirement homes built before 1998. Our member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Mr. Miller—his bill is asking for all retirement homes to be equipped with automatic sprinklers, regardless of when they were built.

Mr. Speaker, I'll have the pleasure tomorrow to speak with the Ontario fire chiefs' association, and I certainly will commend them on the role that they play in our emergency preparedness in this province. They're a vital component to ensuring the safety of all the residents in our regions of the province, and they are an important key.

Let's also remember the first responders, police and paramedics who play an important role in our safety. Let's also remind ourselves in this House that they are public servants, that they serve us, to protect us. They put their lives at risk to ensure our safety. In this House, when we discuss the nature of our public service, let's remind ourselves of the important role that they play on our behalf in our communities, and value that role instead of commoditizing their roles and their jobs. They play a role in our communities that really is invaluable, and that is maintaining the safety and the health of our communities and seniors, elderly—vulnerable populations. It's a role that I think we can all appreciate—but all stand here to protect and to ensure that they're given the skills and the tools that they need.

Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. It is a pleasure to commend the actions of our first responders and emergency services.

PETITIONS

WATER QUALITY

Mr. John O'Toole: I have a petition from my riding of Durham which reads as follows:

"Whereas under the Health Protection and Promotion Act, Ontario regulation 319/08, public health inspectors are required to undertake risk assessments of small drinking water systems;

"Whereas many of these small drinking water systems are located in homes operating bed and breakfasts in rural Ontario" in my riding;

"Whereas private homes that are the sites of bed and breakfasts already have potable drinking water used by the homeowners and their families every day;

"Whereas many of these bed and breakfasts have established the quality of their drinking water through years of regular testing" and use;

"Whereas these home-based businesses are facing high costs to comply with the requirements of regulation 319/08," of which I've spoken to the Minister of Health and the Minister of the Environment;

"Therefore we, the undersigned"—my constituents—"petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Health amend Ontario regulation 319/08 to give the testing track record of a small drinking water system greater weight in the risk assessment process;

"Furthermore we, the undersigned, ask that bed and breakfasts operated within a private home with a drinking

water supply meeting all the requirements of a private home not be subject to regulation 319/08.”

I’m pleased to sign and support this and give it to Georgia, one of the pages.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I have a petition here about bullying in our schools.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas all Ontario students have the right to a school environment where they feel safe, welcome and respected;

“Whereas school boards must take preventative measures against bullies and issue tougher consequences for those who participate in bullying;

“Whereas creating a safe and positive learning environment is an essential part of helping students succeed in school;

“Whereas schools across the province must support any group promoting understanding and respect for people of all sexual orientations and gender identities;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That Bill 13, the Accepting Schools Act, 2012, be adopted so that students across Ontario are protected from the harmful effects of bullying and given every opportunity to succeed in school.”

Speaker, I agree with this petition, affix my signature and send it via page Shaumik.

1540

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Ms. Sylvia Jones: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas a report from Ontario’s Auditor General on the province’s air ambulance service, Ornge, found a web of questionable financial deals where tens of millions of taxpayers’ dollars have been wasted and public safety compromised;

“Whereas Ornge officials created a ‘mini-conglomerate’ of private entities that enriched former senior officers and left taxpayers on the hook for \$300 million in debt;

“Whereas government funding for Ornge climbed 20% to \$700 million, while the number of patients it airlifted actually declined;

“Whereas a subsidiary of Ornge bought the head office building in Mississauga for just over \$15 million and then leased it back to Ornge at a rate 40% higher than fair market rent;

“Whereas the Liberal Minister of Health completely failed in her duty to provide proper oversight of Ornge;

“Whereas this latest scandal follows the eHealth boondoggle where \$2 billion in health dollars have been wasted;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“The government of Ontario immediately appoint a special all-party select committee to investigate the scandals surrounding Ornge.”

I support this petition fully and give it to page Carley to take to the table.

RADIATION SAFETY

Mr. Reza Moridi: Madam Speaker, I have a number of petitions to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas subsection 6(2)8 of the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act identifies dental hygienists as persons deemed to be qualified to operate an X-ray machine; and

“Whereas dental hygienists need to be able to prescribe X-rays and to be designated as radiation protection officers in order to provide their patients/clients with safe and convenient access to a medically necessary procedure, as is already the case in many comparable jurisdictions;

“We, the dental hygienists working in Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To express support for the motion filed on April 17, 2012, by the member from Richmond Hill that asks the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to establish a committee consisting of experts to review the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act (1990) and its regulations and make recommendations on how to modernize this act and bring it to 21st-century standards so that it becomes responsive to the safety of patients/clients and the public and to include all forms of radiation that are currently used in the health care sector for diagnostic and therapeutic purposes.”

I fully agree with this petition and pass it on to page Jenny.

TAXATION

Mr. Victor Fedeli: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas many Ontario residents have come to rely on receiving their full Ontario tax credit early in the year; and

“Whereas changes to the tax credit payment schedule were not widely publicized;

“We, the undersigned, do hereby petition the government of Ontario to reinstate the Ontario tax credit payment schedule utilized during 2011.”

I agree with this petition, sign it and hand it to page Vincent.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I have a petition from residents of York South–Weston addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas St. John the Evangelist Catholic elementary school in Weston is overcrowded, with 480 students in a school designed for 260; and

"Whereas the students will be relocating 40 minutes away in September 2012 during the duration of the Metrolinx Weston tunnel construction; and

"Whereas the Toronto Catholic District School Board has placed St. John the Evangelist third on the urgent capital priority list for 2012;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Respectfully request full funding to replace St. John the Evangelist school during the Metrolinx Weston tunnel construction; therefore, the students are not relocated twice."

I agree with this petition, will sign it and hand it over to page Safa.

REGULATION OF HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

Mr. Steve Clark: I'd like to thank Boardwalk Dental Care in Brockville for submitting this petition, which has 80 names. It's a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas, as currently legislated by the Regulated Health Professionals Act, 1991, a dentist can be charged with sexual abuse for treating their spouse;

"Whereas the equation cannot be made between placing a filling, scaling a patient's teeth or reading a patient's X-rays and sexual abuse;

"Whereas dentists support zero tolerance as it relates to sexual abuse;

"Whereas, in rural and northern underserved areas of Ontario, dentists prevented from treating their spouses may create a barrier to access;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care immediately exempt dentists from the sexual abuse provisions under the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991, to allow dentists to provide dental treatment to their spouses; and

"That the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return the authority to review and exercise discretion on a case-by-case basis any complaints involving spousal treatment to the Royal College of Dental Surgeons of Ontario."

I affix my signature and send it to the table with page William.

AIR-RAIL LINK

Mr. Jonah Schein: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas diesel trains are a health hazard for people who live near them;

"Whereas more toxic fumes will be created by the 400 daily trains than the car trips they are meant to replace;

"Whereas the planned air-rail link does not serve the communities through which it passes and will be priced beyond the reach of most commuters;

"Whereas all major cities in the world with train service between their downtown core and the airport use electric trains;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario stop building the air-rail link for diesel and move to electrify the route immediately;

"That the air-rail link be designed, operated and priced as an affordable transportation option between all points along its route."

I support this petition, sign my name to it and give it to page Constantine.

RADIATION SAFETY

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas subsection 6(2)8 of the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act identifies dental hygienists as persons deemed to be qualified to operate an X-ray machine; and

"Whereas dental hygienists need to be able to prescribe X-rays and to be designated as radiation protection officers in order to provide their patients/clients with safe and convenient access to a medically necessary procedure, as is already the case in many comparable jurisdictions;

"We, the dental hygienists working in Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To express support for the motion filed on April 17, 2012, by the member from Richmond Hill that asks the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to establish a committee consisting of experts to review the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act (1990) and its regulations and make recommendations on how to modernize this act and bring it to 21st-century standards, so that it becomes responsive to the safety of patients/clients and the public and to include all forms of radiation that are currently used in the health care sector for diagnostic and therapeutic purposes."

As I agree with this petition, I will sign it and send it to the table with page Jenny.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Jim Wilson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas residents of Ontario want a moratorium on all further industrial wind turbine development until a third party health and environmental study has been completed; and

"Whereas people in Ontario living within close proximity to industrial wind turbines have reported negative health effects; we need to study the physical, social, economic and environmental impacts of wind turbines; and

"Whereas Ontario's largest farm organization, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, and the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario have called for a suspension of industrial wind turbine development until these serious shortcomings can be addressed, and the Auditor General confirmed wind farms were created in haste and with no planning; and

"Whereas there have been no third party health and environmental studies done on industrial wind turbines, and the Auditor General confirmed there was no real plan for green energy in Ontario and wind farms were constructed in haste;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government support Huron-Bruce MPP Lisa Thompson's private member's motion which calls for a moratorium on all industrial wind turbine development until a third party health and environmental study has been completed."

I agree with this petition, and I will sign it.

TOURISM

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: "Whereas tourism is a vital contributor to the economy of northwestern Ontario, bringing hundreds of millions of dollars into the province's economy from other provinces and the United States, unlike other regions in the province whose target demographic is people who already reside in Ontario;

"Whereas northwestern Ontario's tourist economy has been under attack by government policies such as the cancellation of the spring bear hunt, the harmonized sales tax (HST), the strong Canadian dollar and difficulties passing through the Canada/United States border; and

"Whereas studies have shown that tourism in the northwest nets significantly more money per stay than other regions of the province, in part due to visitors frequenting historical sites, parks and roadside attractions that they learn about through travel information centres;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"To keep the travel information centres in Fort Frances, Kenora and Rainy River open permanently to ensure that northwestern Ontario maximizes the benefit of our tourist economy."

I affix my name to this petition and ask page Sarah to deliver it to the table.

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RADIATION SAFETY

Mr. Joe Dickson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas subsection 6(2)8 of the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act identifies dental hygienists as persons deemed to be qualified to operate an X-ray machine; and

"Whereas dental hygienists need to be able to prescribe X-rays and to be designated as radiation protection officers in order to provide their

patients/clients with safe and convenient access to a medically necessary procedure, as is already the case in many comparable jurisdictions;

"We, the dental hygienists working in Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To express support for the motion filed on April 17, 2012, by the member from Richmond Hill that asks the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to establish a committee consisting of experts to review the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act (1990) and its regulations and make recommendations on how to modernize this act and bring it to 21st-century standards, so that it becomes responsive to the safety of patients/clients and the public and to include all forms of radiation that are currently used in the health care sector for diagnostic and therapeutic purposes."

I will attach my name to this and pass it to Dia.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I have yet another petition signed by thousands of people addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario horse racing and breeding industry generates \$2 billion of economic activity, mostly in rural Ontario;

"Whereas more than 60,000 Ontarians are employed by Ontario's horse racing and breeding industry;

"Whereas 20% of the funds generated by the OLG slots-at-racetracks program is reinvested in racetracks and the horse racing and breeding industry, while 75% is returned to the government of Ontario;...

"Whereas the government has announced plans to cancel the slots-at-racetracks program, a decision that will cost the government \$1.1 billion per year and threatens more than 60,000 jobs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Call on the government of Ontario to protect the \$1.1 billion of revenue the government received annually because of the OLG slots-at-racetracks program; direct OLG to honour the contracts with racetracks and protect the horse racing and breeding industry by continuing the OLG slots-at-racetracks revenue-sharing program."

I sign my name to this petition.

OPPOSITION DAY

JOB CREATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario calls upon the government of Ontario to create a tax credit that rewards companies for creating new jobs; and that the government consider funding this tax credit from the recently created \$2-billion jobs and prosperity fund.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Ms. Horwath has moved opposition day number 4.

Ms. Horwath.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I think that it's pretty clear to everyone in this place and, in fact, every person in this province, that we have a jobs crisis here in Ontario. Far too many people are having serious, serious problems finding work in their communities, and when I say in their communities, I mean in communities, really, in all parts of this province. Statistics Canada reports that Windsor's unemployment rate is stuck in the double digits at 10.7%—18,000 people in that community out of work; London, 22,700 people out of a job, also flirting with double digits, in terms of the unemployment rate; St. Catharines/Niagara, 16,000 people unemployed; 25,000 people looking for work in the city of Hamilton; 27,000 people are out of a job in northern Ontario; unemployment is stuck at 17,000 in Oshawa; and 275,000 people are without a job in Toronto, where the unemployment rate sits at 8.6%.

This is unacceptable, Speaker. The government's jobs plan, if they had one, certainly has not been showing any results whatsoever. A recent poll, in fact, showed that Ontarians are among the least optimistic about Canada's economy, with only about one third of people in that poll believing that the economy is going to improve within the next year. The same survey shows that the people in this province are most concerned about job loss, with more than one quarter worried about somebody in their household losing a job. We have the most pessimistic outlook, in terms of jobs, of any province in this entire country.

Not only is our unemployment rate above the national average, but the average wages in this province for people who are working are actually falling; they're declining. We're one of the only provinces in the entire nation where this is actually happening.

Although Ontario is no longer in a technical recession, the impact of the jobs lost years ago and the slowdown in the US have had a significant and lasting impact. The fact is that the federal and provincial governments' so-called plan on jobs hasn't worked for people in this province.

Let's remember that plan: billions and billions and billions of dollars in across-the-board, no-strings-attached corporate tax cuts, along with an unfair HST. That was supposed to deliver 600,000 new jobs in the province. People rolled their eyes—New Democrats rolled their eyes—when these government announcements were being made. Not only was the province going to be making it more expensive to get to work and keep the lights on; the government was wildly claiming that it would actually create jobs with these kinds of policies. Well, the proof is in the pudding. It absolutely has not worked.

The fact is, if the billions and billions of dollars of federal and provincial government money that they have given up on corporate tax giveaways were going to create work, there wouldn't be 550,000 people in this province who are still looking for jobs. Those are failed policies that this government and the federal government need to admit have not worked.

There would be more jobs than anybody knew what to do with if those policies had actually worked. We wouldn't be talking at all about jobs in this Legislature. Yet we have to talk about jobs every single day, because this government needs to acknowledge that its policies have failed and that we need to get serious about doing things differently when it comes to job creation in this province.

Despite the corporate tax cuts, investment as a share of GDP has declined steadily over the past decade. We are not getting investment in this province. In fact, a couple of times the Premier has publicly rued the fact and wondered why we're not getting investment in this province. Investments have actually reduced from 8% to 6% in terms of GDP.

What's happening to those dollars we're giving corporations in HST and in corporate tax cuts across the board? They're taking that money and they're stashing it away in cash reserves. The corporate sector is doing quite fine, thank you very much; they're doing quite fine. But the rest of us are not benefiting at all from those kinds of policies. Our economy is not benefiting, workers are not benefiting and families in this province are not benefiting from those policies.

It's interesting. Cabinet ministers write big cheques, cut ribbons, get their photos in the paper, in local news. A little while later, the company closes up shop; it lays off the workers; it goes south. Ask the member from London—Fanshawe. She'll tell you what happened when Caterpillar did that exact same thing. We have example after example. Look at Navistar: They did the exact same thing. They get the corporate tax cuts, they get the giveaways, but there are no strings attached. So what happens? We're giving up revenue; we're giving away the dollars. We're giving away the very dollars that those hard-pressed workers who are now laid off were putting into our coffers, and we're giving them to those companies who are simply walking out of the province, pulling up their stakes and walking away.

Navistar laid off 1,000 hard-working Ontarians, and what happened? They moved to Ohio. Guess what was happening in Ohio? Oh, they had job creation tax credits in Ohio; that's what happened. They moved to a state in the United States where they had job creation tax credits—something that we need to do here in this province, I think.

This government wrote a \$7-million cheque to Global Sticks in Thunder Bay, and what happened there? They closed their doors. Recently they reopened their doors, but they still have yet to meet the jobs that this government claimed would be created by investing in this company.

This government wrote a \$2.5-million cheque to Silicon Knights of St. Catharines, and then they laid off their workforce, half of it.

Your no-strings-attached corporate tax giveaways, the way that this government has been doing things, have simply not created jobs. Ask the people at John Deere in Welland; Xstrata in Sudbury; the GM truck plant in

Oshawa; AbitibiBowater in northern Ontario; BFGoodrich in Kitchener–Waterloo; the list goes on and on and on. Ask them if they think that no-strings-attached corporate tax cuts made their lives better.

1600

The fact is, the government's strategy has not worked. It has not created jobs, and instead of investing, the corporations are sitting on record levels of cash. Non-financial corporations had \$477 billion—\$477 billion, Speaker—in cash reserves in the second quarter of 2011. That's up 200% from a decade earlier and an astonishing 750% from two decades earlier.

The heart of the problem is that there's absolutely no incentive for companies to use the money that they take to make investments. They can do anything they want with that money. They could create jobs, but they certainly don't have to. They could invest; obviously, they don't have to, because they haven't been. They've done neither in the last 10 years. They're not creating jobs, they're not investing and they haven't done so since the government started yet another round of corporate tax cuts back in 2009.

It's a failed, failed policy—it's a miserably failed policy—and what we're doing in this motion very clearly is acknowledging the fact that these initiatives have been an utter failure and that we need to change the direction, we need to do something differently. What we need to do is actually take a more targeted approach that says that those companies that are investing should get tax credits, those companies that are creating jobs should get tax credits. That way, the revenue that we're giving up, at least we know we're getting something for it: We're getting people back to work, which should be the number one priority of this government. That's what the number one priority of this government should be.

We have brought this up year after year after year, and the Liberals, in their arrogance, have ignored it year after year after year. What New Democrats are saying is that you've set up a jobs and prosperity council or fund, you've got the opportunity, and we ask you to do it yet again. We want you to use some of those dollars and earmark them for job creation tax credits, because if there's one thing hard-working Ontarians want to do, it's get back to work, and they want the government's commitment to help them get there. It's a simple motion, Speaker, and I expect everyone to support it today.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm pleased to get up and participate in this debate on a motion that the NDP has put forward to create a tax credit that rewards companies for creating new jobs. It sounds like a good idea, and I think our Premier has indicated that it's something we'd be willing to consider.

I want to begin by thanking the leader of the third party for the approach she took during the last budget discussions and negotiations. I think she took a responsible approach in working with us to craft some ideas and some changes to the budget that made it easier for her

party to support. I think it stands in contrast to the approach taken by the Leader of the Opposition, who took a different approach, who decided not to engage, who decided not to be involved at all. In fact, someone said that that's going AWOL, absent without leadership. So I want to commend the leader of the third party for taking a different approach.

I guess one of the things I look at, though, is that I seem to remember—in fact, I think it's more than just remember. I think part of the agreement that the leader of the third party made with the Premier was that we would take this constructive idea of a jobs tax credit, refer it to the soon-to-be-created jobs and prosperity task force, so that they could use their expertise to determine whether this is an idea that stands up under scrutiny. Is this an idea that is worth pursuing? Is it better than some of the things that we're doing now? It may well be, and we're very open to that.

So I think the Premier has been very collegial in his acceptance of this as a constructive idea. That's how I would have thought it would have been brought forward today: as a constructive idea. Instead, from the leader of the third party we got a diatribe running down Ontario's economy, running down the work that's being done by our business sector to grow a strong economy. That was disappointing, very disappointing.

I think, frankly, it's a bit of an end run. I thought we had an agreement to bring this forward and put it towards the jobs and prosperity council. I thought that was the agreement, but instead, Madam Chair, today they're trying to do an end run so that the task force doesn't even have the opportunity to look at this and compare it. I don't know why they would want to do that. I don't know why they'd be afraid to let the experts have a look at this and give us some advice and then together we can make a decision as to how we move forward, but that's what they've decided to do.

I think our approach is sensible. I think our approach is very reasonable. Let's take a good look at this. Let's accept it as a constructive idea. Let's put it into the mix of decisions that are going to have to be made as we consolidate a number of business support programs and tax expenditure programs. There are too many business support programs. There are too many tax expenditure programs. We need to bring it under one window. That's what we've acknowledged. That's what we want to do in the budget. We set out the jobs and prosperity task force to take a look at some of these programs to provide the little bit better focus to ensure that we're getting absolute full value for the investments we make, and at the same time to identify about a quarter of a billion dollars in savings that come off of our budget.

What the leader of the third party is proposing today is a tax credit that might create some jobs, something that we would welcome, that we'd like to take a look at. What they haven't said clearly is how they're going to pay for it. They say, "Let's take it out of the business support programs"—easy to say, a little harder to do. It's a little

harder to do when you look at what some of the programs are.

Let's just look at, for instance, business support tax credits. Is the leader of the third party suggesting we cut back on the film and television project tax credits that are very, very important to our entertainment industry that is contributing \$1.2 billion to the economy? Or what about—this is something else that I guess she considers corporate welfare—the apprenticeship training tax credit? I think supporting apprenticeships is a good thing. I think it's important. I think it's good for the economy. Are you suggesting that we should be getting rid of that in favour of your tax credit?

Interjections.

Hon. Brad Duguid: That's fair game. You can suggest that, but I think it's reasonable for us to say, "Let's let some experts take a look at it. Let's take a close look to see if it's more important than the apprentice training tax credit."

What about the co-op education tax credit? In this day and age, we want our students getting a good education. That co-op tax credit is really important.

What about the Ontario business research institute tax credit or the Ontario innovation tax credit? They may be tax credits we want to take a look at. They may not be getting the full value that we want or the job creation we want. That's why we're looking at it. But I would hope that the leader of the third party is still in favour of research and innovation. They're the tax credits that she's saying we should be doing away with.

What about the resource tax credit? I think our resource industry is pretty important to this economy, pretty important to the north. There's a member who sits a few seats away from the leader of the third party who might be just a little bit upset if we touched those resource tax credits. You're going to have to square that with that particular member.

What about the Ontario small business deduction? That's important. Helping to grow small business I thought was something the NDP used to support. But I guess these days they're saying, "No, we don't even need to look at that anymore. What we're proposing is a lot more important."

What about the Ontario tax credit for manufacturing and processing?

I think you get my point, Madam Chair. There are a lot of tax credits out there. We need to take a look at it. There's an opportunity here to look at some form of consolidation to ensure they're focused and we're getting best value, but I think it's something we need to do reasonably.

Let's take a look at some of the business support programs, because these are some of the programs that the NDP are going to be suggesting we're going to have to cut if we are to find the 200-million-odd dollars that the NDP proposal is going to cost. There are aboriginal programs, very important aboriginal programs that we have in our business support programs. There are rural and agricultural programs that are very, very important to

rural Ontario and our farming sector. There are the auto programs that are very important to our auto industry. There's the southwest Ontario development fund, the eastern Ontario development fund, and there's also, of course, the northern heritage fund. Those are programs that are all really important and actually programs I know the NDP supports, but those are the programs that we've got to take a look at. They're part of those business support programs that the leader of the third party says we shouldn't be engaged in.

What about the programs that support the manufacturing sector? Or what about our growth programs that are attracting businesses here, like the strategic jobs and investment fund? It's a hugely successful fund, attracting businesses here, growing jobs in this province that are very, very important.

1610

Is the leader of the third party suggesting we cut support for the wine industry? She might be suggesting that, because she's not telling us where she's going to get this money from.

What about craft brewers? Should we abandon the craft brewers? I know that Mr. Crack wouldn't want to see us do that. I can't remember the name of his—

Mr. Grant Crack: Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

Hon. Brad Duguid: There's a craft brewer there. He'd be very upset if that wasn't there. What about life sciences and that important growing sector in our economy? Is she talking about getting rid of our clean energy benefit for businesses? Businesses benefit from it.

Interjection.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Not big businesses; small businesses benefit from it. Is that where she wants to cut?

Or how about the forestry industry? That same member that sits a few seats over from you might be just a little tad upset if that was one of the areas you want to see us reduce our supports for.

Madam Chair, again, I think what my point is here is that these are very important programs that are creating jobs and are contributing to building a very important sector.

I want to end with this, because I know I've got a lot of other colleagues who want to participate in this debate. Where I really have a problem with the comments of the leader of the third party is when she is talking down our economy. This is an economy that grew 46,100 net jobs. One in four jobs created in North America last month were here in the province of Ontario. That's something that everyone in this Legislature should be proud of. We shouldn't be trying to talk that down. Some 345,000 jobs were created in this province since the recession. That's a pretty good record. That's more jobs than the rest of Canada combined. That's something we, in this part of the House, are proud of, but we're also proud of our business community, which has worked very hard to respond and create those jobs. Today, and in the past, you spent more time trying to trash-talk that business community than working with us to grow our business community.

Madam Chair, my time is running out here—

Interjection: In more ways than one.

Hon. Brad Duguid: —and I know I've got a lot of colleagues that want to—

Interjections.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I thank the third party for their rousing response, and I'm delighted to take part in this debate. I look forward to seeing what the results are of the vote today. I won't be supporting this motion, Madam Chair, not that I don't think that the tax credit could be a good idea; it's something, though, we've got to take a closer look at. We need to compare it with some of the other alternatives and come forward with the best possible policies for the people of this province, the workers of this province, to grow our exports, to grow our job opportunities. That's what we intend to do, Madam Chair, and we welcome the third party's support for those continued efforts. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I am pleased to rise and offer feedback and comments with respect to the NDP opposition day motion today. I have to sort of chuckle to myself at the comments of the Minister of Economic Development and Innovation, coming from his own lips, when he talks about time running out. I think time is running out when it comes to the Dalton McGuinty government. I know I've been clear that economic recovery will come to the province of Ontario the day Dalton McGuinty loses his job, and I think everyone is anticipating that at some point.

I am going to be sharing my time with my honourable colleague from Thornhill a little later.

Speaker, the NDP are proposing that the Liberal government create a tax credit that rewards companies for creating new jobs and that the government consider funding this tax credit from the recently created \$2-billion jobs and prosperity fund. I have been on the record many times saying that this government is doing nothing to create jobs. We saw in the recent budget that they want to create a committee to discuss creating jobs, that they want to host a conference and a party to discuss creating jobs. This government doesn't have a jobs plan. They don't have any plan. They have no plan to create jobs at all in the province of Ontario.

At first glance, this motion sounds like a good idea: Reward companies financially for creating jobs. In theory, it sounds like it would be a good thing for Ontario. But I would like to offer a different opinion to this House today. I believe that Ontario has to be a place of equality. Here in Ontario, we pride ourselves on principles such as fair and equal treatment for all. This province did not become the economic engine that it once was through favouritism.

Our party, our leader Tim Hudak and our caucus firmly believe that it is the duty of the provincial government to ensure that there is equality among all businesses.

I know I've heard from entrepreneurs, small business owners and corporations of every size, and they are telling me the same thing. The current government's favouritism, tax breaks and subsidies are not fair and they're not working. In fact, what I've been told is that this government's tinkering and lack of direction is actually hurting Ontario's competitiveness, taking hard-earned taxpayers' money and giving it away, driving up the deficit, and not getting any tangible results in return.

What the Ontario government does need to do is, it needs to foster an environment in Ontario that makes this province the absolute number one destination to own and operate a business. What the government needs to do is make Ontario a world-class place for all to do business—not just for some companies, not just for some industries, but for every single business. Open the markets, increase the competition, create jobs and grow our economy.

Ontario should not be a place that is good for some businesses but bad for others. We need to lessen the tax burden for all the businesses in this province. Since the election back in October, we have heard from a number of people, including Roger Martin, Don Drummond and the Ontario Auditor General, to name a few. They have told us quite clearly that the Ontario government's manoeuvring of finances is not producing the results desired, and it's not working.

The cornerstone of the current government's economic development policy involves granting billions of dollars in corporate subsidies. Often these subsidies have absolutely no benefit to the taxpayer and, in some cases, some of these subsidies offer as much as \$300,000 per job. One company received \$1.5 million to create only five jobs. This is clearly the wrong path to create jobs, and, instead of helping our economy, simply runs up Dalton McGuinty's deficit and runs up Ontario's bills.

Our party believes in fairness and equality for Ontario businesses, and we can't support a new program that favours one business over another. Taxes on businesses must be fair. Ontario is not creating a business-friendly environment by offering tax subsidies to some and not to others. Business owners will look to other regions to own and operate their business if this province continues to show favouritism to some and not to others.

It is only through fair policy that we will grow Ontario's economy and tackle the current jobs crisis that's occurring under this Premier and under this government. That's right, Speaker. Our current jobs crisis, which is a result of Dalton McGuinty's failed leadership, has caused our unemployment rate to be above the national average for over five straight years now. Shameful.

In a recent report done by the Fraser Institute, they found that there is virtually no evidence that corporate welfare is effective. The Fraser Institute says, "Peer-reviewed research on business subsidies does not support political ... claims that corporate welfare is responsible for widespread economic growth." The report went on to say that corporate welfare does not provide a "demonstrable positive impact upon the economy,

employment and tax revenues because of the substitution effect; that is, where hiring at one company, or tax revenues in one locale, merely displace jobs and tax revenues elsewhere, but with no new employment or revenues created overall.”

We have heard time and time again that the shifting of money from one place to another doesn't work. Experts from a variety of different industries have told us the same thing. The government has to stop spending. The Liberals under Dalton McGuinty need to reduce the overall size and cost of government, and they must create a tax structure that is fair for all. If the government were to listen, they would grow our economy, and that would result in more jobs for the people of Ontario.

We keep hearing of ways that the government and the opposition want to move money around in the name of trying to create more jobs. This is just a temporary fix. It's not addressing the real issue. The real issue is that there is a jobs crisis in Ontario, and I believe that the real reason we have a jobs crisis in this province is because taxes are too high, hydro is too expensive and red tape is too thick.

Ontario, thanks to Dalton McGuinty's failed energy experiments, now has the second-highest electricity costs in all of North America. Talk about a race to the bottom.

1620

In my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, high electricity bills are the number one reason why people are losing their jobs and why companies are relocating. There are better places to own and operate a business, so owners and entrepreneurs alike are going to the States and to other jurisdictions where hydro is much more competitive. The sad reality is that it is better to operate a business outside of Ontario than inside of Ontario, thanks to Dalton McGuinty.

I would venture further to say that offering a tax credit for job creation does not outweigh all the other government burdens that exist for business owners in Ontario. The Fraser Institute report concluded in their research that “the best means by which to encourage economic growth is not through assistance from the government, but through neutrality in the competitive marketplace.” The report also noted that governments often point to job creation to justify subsidies. However, it was found that the statistics and the facts on these job creation claims do not support the employment claims by the government.

As reported in the Ottawa Citizen last year on November 15, the recent Roger Martin report asked that the government abandon its policy of picking winners and losers through subsidies to business. The government's job is to ensure that there is equality for all. It's not the job of the government to play favourites or to reward one company and not the other. It is the government's job to ensure that there is a fair tax structure in place, stable government policy and realistic regulations. That is the job of government.

The third party is claiming that taking funds out of the jobs and prosperity fund and giving it to business for creating jobs will help Ontario's economy grow and help

address the jobs crisis in this province. The research we have seen indicates otherwise. Our party believes that it's not the government's job, as I said, to pick winners and losers amongst privately owned companies. Government's role is to create the best conditions for economic growth in a stable, surprise-free environment.

Ontario families also can't afford these massive subsidies and corporate handouts.

With the recent news of Ontario's credit rating being downgraded, the opposition, myself and, really, the rest of Ontario are extremely worried. For several weeks, all that we have heard from the party opposite is that the proposed budget is good for Ontario and that this budget will bring Ontario back to prosperity. The budget is just another sad example of the Liberal government refusing to listen.

With the recent credit downgrades, the Liberal government's budget has failed. No matter how many times the finance minister looks through newspaper clippings with a microscope to find someone who says the opposite, he will not change the facts. No matter how many times the finance minister says the budget is just what Ontario needs, it will not change the fact that Ontario is headed toward economic failure.

Our province was once the economic engine of Canada, and now it's in debt so much that our credit scores have been downgraded, thanks to this government.

We have said it over and over again: The Liberal government must stop spending. This is a reality that the Liberal Party and the NDP have to accept. The provincial treasury is empty and our credit score has now, sadly, been downgraded. This is unacceptable. Dalton McGuinty has been entrusted with the finances of the people of Ontario and all that he has done for the last nine years is spend. Now the NDP are encouraging more spending.

As I said, government needs to create the climate for growth and then get out of the way. Entrepreneurs need to be left alone, and jobs will be created, period. Our caucus, our party, believes this is how to create a climate in Ontario that will bring business back to this province. Our goal is to bring long-term growth to Ontario's labour market and to make Ontario the best place to create and grow a business.

I'll be voting against this motion. I encourage my colleagues to do the same.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: It is indeed an honour to stand up here today. You know, for my entire political life, which is now very long, I have had nothing but the highest of respect for business and business people. They are, in fact, as a Conservative will probably tell you, the engine that runs this country, this province, this city.

In fact, one thing I've learned about business people, though, is that they will always do whatever they can to maximize their profit. That's why they're business people in the first place. If you can understand that little fundamental rule of capitalism and about business, you

will understand it all. They will do whatever they need to do to maximize their profit.

So here we go. What we're talking about today is a tax credit. You can give a tax credit as a carrot and a stick. If they want to grow their business and hire an additional person, then there is a tax credit to do this. They will understand that. They will understand that by bringing in additional people in order to grow the business, they can actually get a rebate and it will help to maximize their profit. I think there will be hundreds, maybe thousands of businesses across this province that will do exactly that.

What is the Conservative thought? The Conservative thought is to look at Milton Friedman as if he's some kind of god, to say that this Milton Friedman trickle-down theory is all you have to do. You just make sure that the guys who have all the money get more, and then it will trickle down to the poor over time. I remember when Milton Friedman was first on television expounding his theories. I remember with horror watching a United States President stand there and say, "This is our new idea. This is what we're going to do here." I remember watching in horror, watching the Iron Lady of Great Britain do exactly the same thing. Did that help those economies? Did that help anything there? What you have in both of those economies, much like here, is that the rich have gotten very rich and the poor have gotten very poor. The whole middle class is shrinking, and that's as a direct result of what is being espoused by my friend who spoke immediately before me, because that's what they believe.

Real wages in Ontario have declined in the last 20 years. People, even in the middle class, are not as well-off as they were 20 years ago. But what has happened is that corporate holdings have gone up 750%. That's money sitting in the bank that is not doing any good to our economy, not doing any good to the people of this province or the 550,000 people who are looking for work. Surely this Legislature has an obligation to look for the 550,000 people looking for work before we have to look to industry and corporations who are sitting on billions of dollars—billions of dollars—which are to no effect, except to make them rich.

We have, I think, a pretty modest tax proposal. What we are saying is that the government should invest up to \$250 million out of a pot of \$2 billion that they now spend to rearrange the tax structure. We are not saying, as the minister said when he gave that long diatribe, "What do you want to get rid of, money for investments here, money for the wine industry or money for the craft brewers?" or any of those things. What we're saying is that you have \$2 billion; you take \$250 million of that, or about 12%, and you redirect it.

We leave it to government and to finance, or even to this jobs and prosperity council that hasn't been set up, to determine exactly how that's going to be. But in the end, you're going to get credits. You've got to get 550,000 people or a great many of them finding a job, because I will tell you, Madam Speaker, if that money is properly invested and if business will do what is best for them,

they will see that the way to get additional credits or tax credits, the way to pay a percentage of the new employees wages and to grow their business, is to do precisely that. I think that will do far better effect than willy-nilly handing out money that has no strings attached.

The leader of the NDP quite rightly pointed out some of the failures of this government. I think government members don't want to listen to those failures. They don't want to know that millions of dollars were given away to absolutely no effect. We are saying, quite simply, if you hire somebody, you'll get a tax credit. It's pretty easy. I think the public will understand that, and I do believe the public will support that.

1630

This is a two-year, refundable, job-creator tax credit through the corporate income tax system. It is not very hard to administer. You just have to file your income tax, you just have to show that you have hired some additional people, you get a refund off of that, and it's done. It will benefit everyone, but I think particularly it will benefit small business in the province of Ontario. They are the incubators. They are the ones who directly create new jobs, far more than large business, and the history of Ontario will show that.

It's those incubator companies, those new ones starting up—don't take this badly, but when RIM was first starting out, what an incubator company that was. But as they get very large, just like all large companies, they lose a little bit of their momentum. I think that if we need to create the jobs, we need to create them at the bottom.

Take a province like Manitoba. Manitoba has no taxes for small business; no corporate taxes up to \$500,000. They have no taxes. That's the kind of thing that will help a small business person. That's what we need to do and look at here in Ontario. But I'm not going down that road right now.

The road we need to do, and the most pressing social priority we have, is to put 550,000 people back to work. If the government's policies haven't worked, please try something else. Don't wait for a prosperity council a year from now; seize the opportunity now. It's right here, it's doable and it can be put into the corporate tax system right away. We can be putting people back to work. And do you know something? Maybe the jobs and prosperity council will have a look at it and say, "What a great idea. We endorse it," rather than having the same debate we're having here today.

Madam Speaker, I'd like to close by inviting everybody to vote for this. This is not some radical idea coming out of strictly us; this is an idea that is taking place already in other places in Canada. It's an idea whose time has come in the United States, because the President of the United States, Mr. Obama, has included this in his platform. It's an idea that the people of France bought into on Sunday. They are sick of the austerity budget where all the people at the bottom are the losers, and they want a government that is proactive and will bring jobs and prosperity back to them.

I'm telling you that if the government agrees to do that here in Ontario, I will be one of those who would stand up and applaud it.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Mauro: The opposition day motion says the following:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario calls upon the government of Ontario to create a tax credit that rewards companies for creating new jobs; and that the government consider funding this tax credit from the recently created \$2-billion jobs and prosperity fund."

I just want to be clear, for the people who are following this debate on television who might be interested in this issue, that if you read this you might be left with the impression that there is \$2 billion of untethered money perhaps, if we could characterize it that way; that this is a new fund that has taken new money that is looking for a place to go and live and reside.

Of course, that's not the case. What the jobs and prosperity fund will do is take the money that has already been spent and earmarked historically on about 40 different programs across about seven ministries, as I understand it, and consolidate it into this particular fund. This council that is to be appointed in short order will then review all of these programs and decide which of that \$2 billion is being spent well and which of it is not being spent well. So I want to start there and make sure that people who are following this understand that there isn't \$2 billion just floating out there ready for people to come and apply and we're going to see what we can use the money for. In fact, what's being brought forward today represents an additional expenditure at a time when we're bringing in a budget obviously that is trying to get us back into a balanced position by 2017-18. It's important that we put that frame around what this is trying to do.

The other thing I would like to say before I get into my general remarks is that in the book we're talking about the jobs and prosperity council to be appointed soon that will oversee this jobs and prosperity fund that has \$2 billion historically attached to it. But we're surprised that this is here today because, as we understood it, there was a deal in place that this particular idea, which has been spoken to in the Legislature on a number of occasions, would be referred to the soon-to-be-formed council and that they would take it under consideration and that they would report back to the Legislative Assembly sometime early in 2013. We as Liberals on this side of the House thought there was a deal between the third party and the government about how this particular item was going to be dealt with.

I'll leave that out there just for that, because the information that has been provided to me was that there was an agreement in place on how this item was going to be dealt with. Apparently, that's not the case.

As I've mentioned, the jobs and prosperity council administering the fund—we were willing to look at the

idea to make a determination around whether or not this idea had merit. We are not dismissing it out of hand. It is still our understanding and our belief that this will go forward to that group and that they will come back with an informed opinion on whether or not this particular type of tax credit has merit or not.

Speaker, I want to give you, however, a few examples of some things that we have done that I believe very clearly have created jobs in a very tangible way—all of which have been voted against by the third party that has brought forward this opposition day motion today. For example, our infrastructure funding over the course of the last eight years going on nine years: We have spent \$60 billion on infrastructure in the province of Ontario over the course of the last eight years. This budget maintains a commitment that we made in the election of 2011 to a further \$30 billion to \$35 billion on infrastructure over the course of the next three years. I don't believe there is an individual who represents a riding in this Legislature today who can't reference projects in their particular riding over the last eight years that didn't bring some significant benefit to their communities. That's \$30 billion more yet to come. We know that money creates jobs. The previous \$60 billion was voted against at every turn by the third party.

The northern Ontario heritage fund: I mention this one often in the Legislature. When we came in, it was \$60 million. We transformed it to fund private-sector job creation. Beginning in 2007, we were increasing it by \$10 million each year. The northern Ontario heritage fund has gone from \$60 million up to \$100 million a year, every one of those increases voted against by the members of the third party, who are bringing forward a tax credit proposal that they say will create jobs. Yet they voted against those increases in the northern Ontario heritage fund. In fact, when they were in government in the early 1990s, they took all \$60 million out of the fund and put it in consolidated revenue; they took it right out of the north.

Here's what the northern Ontario heritage fund has done. Since October 2003, more than 17,800 direct jobs have been created or sustained in the north as a result of approximately 4,400 projects, to which the NOHFC committed more than \$723 million. These investments have leveraged another \$2.4 billion from contractors—an example of a program that works, an example of a program that creates jobs, voted against by the members of the third party. In the same vein, the eastern Ontario development fund and the southwestern Ontario development fund—all voted against by members of the third party.

The northern highways program—voted against by the third party all the time. Record levels of investment since 2003, peaking at about \$770 million in 2010. The previous high on northern highways was about \$250 million in any one year. We peaked in 2009 or 2010 at about \$770 million, bringing forward major northern highway transformation, creating jobs, creating safer

roadways—all voted against by the members of the third party.

The Second Career program: We know what happened in 2008, although some will not acknowledge it. The world went through the greatest recession since the Great Depression; 30 million to 40 million people lost their jobs. We created Second Career. That program has seen, I think, 40,000 or 50,000 people go through it, and a lot of those people, through the support provided by Second Career, have found themselves back in the workforce. This is a program that is a wonderful example of job creation, a very, very good piece.

I think that when we talk on matters of job creation, it is important that the third party, the NDP, come clean on exactly what their policy piece is when it comes to development of the Far North. One of the pieces that gets a lot of discussion certainly in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan, and I would suggest all across northern Ontario, is issues related to mining, specifically the Ring of Fire. What do we know was the policy position of the NDP going into the election in October 2011? On their environmental website was a commitment to no development north of 51.

1640

I say this, looking for them and giving them an opportunity to let us know exactly what their policy is, because if there is one tremendous opportunity for the people of northern Ontario when it comes to job creation, it is in the mining field today. It is more specifically related to issues in the geography that has come to be known as the Ring of Fire. This is a party that brings forward an idea today that they say they want to create jobs, and yet they said, “No development north of 51.” If you’re serious about development north of 51, if you’re really serious about job creation, you will let us know exactly what your position is.

My colleague from Thunder Bay–Superior North, Michael Gravelle, put out a press release on this during the election, and, for the first time in three years or so, that policy piece a day or two later disappeared from their website. People in northern Ontario are truly interested in this issue, and they want to know what the position is of the NDP on this particular piece.

I’m going to close by just referencing some of the comments that were made by the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex in terms of fairness and not picking winners and losers, and that’s a fair comment. But I would ask him if he considered the support that came from our government to the auto sector as picking a winner or picking a loser. Four hundred thousand direct and indirect jobs were saved. Many people felt that without our support, those jobs would have disappeared from Ontario forever.

I remind the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex that, as well, the federal Conservatives came kicking and screaming to the table because that was their language: “We don’t want to pick winners and losers.” That was always their language. Finally, they came kicking and

screaming—400,000 direct and indirect jobs in that sector are still here in Ontario today.

Speaker, I’ve kind of gone over my time a little bit. I apologize to the members of our side for doing that, and I have to wrap it up.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Shurman: I find this an interesting debate. I listened with interest to the leader of the third party, for whom I have great respect, and I listened to her initial points, primarily that there is indeed a jobs crisis in the province of Ontario—we agree with that, in the Progressive Conservative Party; that the McGuinty government has no discernible plan to address this jobs crisis, and we agree with that in the Progressive Conservative Party; and that corporate welfare clearly doesn’t work. We agree with that in the Progressive Conservative Party. So it’s interesting how much common ground there is.

We have this motion before us. The motion is, aside from everything else, a centrepiece of the New Democratic Party that has survived from the election campaign of last summer and fall. What it talks about is a refundable tax credit of 10% of annual salary, to a maximum of \$5,000—in other words, the top salary would be \$50,000—and the job has to exist for the ensuing two years. That’s a rather interesting number. I don’t know that it does very much at the end of the day, but we’ll talk about that further as I continue.

By the way, I listened with interest, as well, as the Minister of Economic Development spent about 10 or 12 minutes going through literally a litany, a long list, of all of the various tax credits and grants and programs and funds that are available. If he was so correct about those funds having the force and effect that he talks about, then we wouldn’t be looking at this motion today, we wouldn’t be weighing this, and there wouldn’t be a motion from the NDP or—a concern of us—there wouldn’t be a jobs crisis if all of that had worked. So you know what, Speaker? A pox on both their houses, because neither of them has got it right.

The NDP motion comes from the election campaign, as I said. In the election campaign, that party took great pains to position itself as centre left. That’s what it wants to be seen as. That’s a branding exercise; they’re centre left. The fact of the matter is, they’re not centre left; they are a socialist party. That’s what they are. They believe in the redistribution of wealth. This is an aspect of how to do that. What we live in in the province of Ontario—

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Shurman: It’s a democratic socialist party, I’ll give you that, but it’s a socialist party. It doesn’t want to admit that what we live in in the province of Ontario, indeed in the Dominion of Canada, is a mixed capitalist system where we all have the opportunity to take our chance, roll our dice and take our best shot. We also know that people who do go out and exercise that entrepreneurial right wind up oftentimes getting burned; this is what happens. They try again. Many people in this House

have done it. Some of you have lost; some of you have won. Same thing for me.

I remember very well in the early 1990s when that party was in power under a fellow named Bob Rae—who I think was in the NDP then and now maybe he's a Liberal; we're not sure quite sure, but we know he's on the left. In any event, they had a program that was not so different from this one. It was called the Jobs Ontario Community Action Plan. The acronym for that was JOCAP—and it was. It was a joke, in many respects. I remember it well, because I used it.

I'm going to tell you how I used it—I used it quite legally and legitimately. I had a small business. It was in its very early stages of infancy. In other debate yesterday, I talked about that period of time. I wasn't drawing any salary, so I would be happy for any kind of government help. But the bottom line on this is, we were in a growth stage and we were creating additional jobs. How were we doing it? We were expanding the capacity of our company: We were buying new equipment, we were building new premises, and we were creating the conditions to accommodate additional staff.

Along comes my partner one day and says, "You know, there's this new fund that's been created by the Ontario government"—I can't remember the number, but 10,000 seems to ring true—"and they will give us up to \$10,000 per job that we create." I said, "Well, we're hiring three new people." She said, "I know. I'm going to apply for it." We got \$30,000. So I was thrilled to get that.

Applause.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I want to thank my friend from the NDP for the applause, because what he's not getting is that I took the money because it was there and it was legal to take, but the bottom line is, the money did not drive the development of the jobs. The jobs happened because of the hard work within our company and the fact that we used our own resources to expand.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Shurman: And the economic development minister says that I should pay it back. Too little, too late, my friend.

The bottom line is, that's what we did. And that's my point: If the government of the day, or the government of this day, said to a small business person like I was, "Here's what we're going to do. We're going to allow you to access small business loans on an easier-to-get basis," or "We're going to reduce your energy costs"—that's a very big deal in the province of Ontario: reduced energy costs. The company that I ran was very electronic, so we had energy costs that were significant but they were probably two cents a kilowatt hour then compared to what would have to be paid now. So energy costs are a big deal. Suppose we had had an accelerated equipment writeoff; that would have been a very interesting one. Suppose that we had been able to get tax credits against leasehold improvements or acquisition of furniture that accommodated people. All of those kinds of things would have helped because we had to do that anyway. And it

was only by doing those things that we created the conditions where we could hire the additional people and, in a very backwards way, wound up claiming the tax credits—actually, they were a payment in cash at the time, if you can believe it. No wonder they were in so much trouble with the deficit. But we'll leave that for another day.

The point is, there is a way to stimulate companies so that they create the jobs that you need. It is not by handing them up to \$5,000 in essentially bribe money and saying, "Look, here's five thousand bucks. Go hire somebody for an additional \$45,000." That's not how you do it. It's never going to work.

With respect to my friends in the NDP, what I can say for that party is that they have principles and they stand by them. I would hope to say that our party has principles and I stand by them, but at that point, we begin to differ.

So I don't know what it is that makes politicians want to meddle and dictate to citizens and businesses how they should spend their money and what they should do. But politicians—and, I'll have to admit it, of all stripes, but today we're talking about that stripe, over on my left. They're trying to say to businesses, "Here's what we want you to do. Here's how we're going to meddle: We're going to give you some money and you're going to create jobs." It doesn't work, Speaker. It doesn't work.

It must be the same mentality that makes it impossible for some people to avoid editing other people's work. You know the way you read something and you say, "You know, if I had written this, it would have been different." Well, that's what they seem to be wanting to do.

I have an inherent dislike—and I think anybody who has heard me debate almost any bill in this Legislature knows it: the less government, the better. The less interference, the better. Create the conditions by doing whatever it is you have to in the tax system or any other code of laws to allow business people to thrive. Take away the red tape. Take away the forms. Let people do what it is I did and so many of you watching on television or here in this House have done: go by your wits and create your business and take advantage of programs that are positive, that can influence the overall well-being of all of us in sectoral stimulation, rather than saying, "I'm going to give you a few bucks and you're going to hire some people." That's not going to happen.

1650

If we have learned anything over the past eight years of the McGuinty government's rule, of the McGuinty government's time in power, it is—a couple of things; picking winners and losers doesn't work. I mentioned the speech earlier by the Minister of Economic Development, who waved a number of funds in front of us. You know, funds are great, but if they get us to a point where we have almost 600,000 people in the province of Ontario who are without jobs, what good are those funds? What are they doing? Telling businesses how to operate, telling them what they have to do doesn't work. We've talked about the regulatory burden here in the province of Ontario. Maybe they want to give \$5,000

towards a \$50,000 job and that job can be to fill out forms, because between that party wanting to do that and that party and its forms, this is where we are. We're in a situation where we have, what, 500,000 or 600,000 regulations governing SMEs, small and medium enterprises in the province of Ontario. You go over to British Columbia and you're talking about half that many. It's manageable at least; probably too many there as well, but manageable. Not for us.

Corporate welfare, which I've been talking about, just plain doesn't work. We have—and on this, the NDP and our party can agree 100%—a very serious jobs crisis in the province of Ontario. We have jobs numbers coming out—I guess it's this Friday—and my friend from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, as our economic development critic, will be talking about them on Friday. I don't like to bet against the province of Ontario; I never do. We all value this province. I want to tell my Liberal friends that I hope that on Friday they end this horrible run that we've been through, because for 63 straight months this province has lagged the entire set of provinces and territories in Confederation on EI. On Friday, I would expect, if the trend continues, that we'll be at 64. I will applaud if it's the end of that run. I can tell you that.

The way to fix the problem of the jobs crisis is to give businesses the tools that they need to create private sector jobs. That's how you do it. That means letting them grow, whether that means hiring new employees right away or investing in machinery, as I mentioned, or infrastructure immediately. Businesses know best what they need and when they need it. Businesses know that. Businesses know that because businesses are run by people who have taken their best shot. They've taken all that God has given them intellectually, they've taken their training from elementary school right through to post-secondary and they're applying it, and that's what we want to stimulate in the province of Ontario.

Putting conditions on businesses, such as the condition the NDP is proposing, is only a short-term, band-aid solution. It's a few bucks to go away. If you hand somebody 10% of—take a median-level entry job, \$30,000 or \$35,000; the business is going to get \$3,000 or \$3,500 a year for two years and then it's going to be gone. That doesn't stimulate anything. Save the money and find a better way. That's what I have to say to my friends in the NDP. That's what I have to say to my friends on the government side. I hope over the course of time, in debates like this, we can arrive at a situation where we can all come together and figure this out, because 600,000 people going wanting in the province of Ontario is an inappropriate approach.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from London-Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It's interesting listening to the government's perspective and the official opposition's perspective. Of course, I prefer our perspective. It's because we have a minority government here that we can all share those perspectives. The voters in 2011 asked for a minority government. They asked for us to all listen

to each other and to come up with the best possible plans that we can make, with input from each party, and deliver on jobs as one of the topics we're talking about today.

I have some research that I did here, and I want to go through a list of some companies that are going outside of Ontario. They've closed shop or they're going to close shop. I'm not sure if some of these have had corporate tax credits or not, but the point is, they're leaving Ontario. We need to have a jobs plan in this budget to keep companies here in Ontario and create jobs.

First on the list is J.M. Smucker Co., which closed its Bick vegetable processing facility in Dunnville and tank farm in Delhi in 2011. Siemens AG closed its gas turbine manufacturing plant in Hamilton in 2010. PPG Industries, a manufacturer of high-tech coatings, closed its plants in Clarkson and Owen Sound in 2009.

I'm going through this list because I'd like it recorded. I'd like to record the actual individual companies—it's just not numbers; it's not that we've created 350,000 jobs or there are 550,000 people out of work; it's the actual names to the companies that are just recently leaving in the last three years.

Electro-Motive in my riding, a subsidiary of Caterpillar, closed its plant in London in 2012. Abbott Labs in Brockville, a producer of liquid nutrition formulas, will close its plant in 2012. Parker-Hannifin, a manufacturer of industrial seals for automotive aerospace and oil and gas markets, closed its plant in Orillia in 2009. Honeywell, a manufacturer of automotive filters, will close its Stratford plant in 2012. Maple Leaf Foods closed its chicken processing plant in Ayr, Ontario, in 2012, and it will close other processing plants in Kitchener, Hamilton and Toronto by the end of 2014. And Ford closed its St. Thomas plant in 2011.

This is the reality of what we're facing today as companies are closing and moving out of Ontario. This budget lacks a job creation plan. We, the NDP, feel that it hasn't been working, that these corporate tax cuts haven't created jobs, and that's what our leader, Andrea Horwath, has said today. So we need to do more.

I also have some information—I found it really interesting, the research that I got. It's a report that I got called What Did Corporate Tax Cuts Deliver? It's a background report for Corporate Tax Freedom Day 2012. On page 5 of this report, the headline is, "Corporate Tax Cuts and Real Corporate Investment."

"KPMG ranks Canada's corporate taxes as the lowest in the G7. Proponents of ever-lower corporate taxes argued that the money corporations saved from lower taxes would be reinvested in real assets such as new factories, new machinery and equipment, and training, thus boosting economic growth and productivity and helping create more and better jobs; however, this is not what happened. Real investment has languished while profitable corporations have been paying out much more in dividends to shareholders and accumulating more financial assets."

So it's not working. Lowering corporate taxes or giving tax cuts to corporations is not making employers

create jobs or better jobs, boosting the economy and getting new machinery, training—getting new equipment. It's not helping. The report then goes on to say:

"While high levels of private investment are important, corporate tax cuts are a costly and ineffective way to raise real business investment. A detailed study for the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives ... by economist Jim Stanford shows that corporate tax cuts since the late 1980s have greatly increased corporate cash flow, while real business investment in building, and in machinery and equipment, has actually fallen as a share of the economy.

"As corporate taxes have been cut, corporate after-tax cash flow has risen, but an increasing portion of that cash has been used to pay down debt, to buy up shares and to increase dividends. The share of after-tax corporate cash flow which has been reinvested in company operations has fallen significantly."

Last is the section that they summarize with "According to Statistics Canada, total corporate cash reserves of private non-financial corporations grew from \$157 billion in the second quarter of 2001 to \$477 billion in the second quarter of 2011."

It's not working. Companies are not taking those lower corporate tax advantages and creating jobs and investing back in Ontario. They're taking those corporate tax cuts and they're putting it in their coffers and they're saving the money. They're not reinvesting in Ontario, in Ontarians, to create jobs. So our job plan is to get that moving. It's to stimulate the economy, getting corporations to reinvest, with tax incentives, so that we can produce jobs and get people back to work and reward companies that are productive.

1700

The member opposite—I'm not sure of his riding right now—talked about when he was in business and he was going to hire three people, and the government at the time had a tax credit of \$10,000 per person he hired. In the same breath, he said, "But we didn't need that money." On principle, if a business doesn't need to take advantage of a government program, I don't think they should. I think if you can do it on your own and you're independent—that program was there for those businesses that needed that boost, that wanted to have those new jobs created but needed that help to permanently put those jobs in Ontario. So, when we talk about principles, if there's a government program that's available, if someone doesn't need to use it, then don't. Leave it there for those who are going to be accessing it when they need it.

I also wanted to address the fact that London-Fanshawe has one of the highest unemployment rates, hovering at about 10%. In my riding, people are asking for the government to come up with solutions to get people back to work.

Again, as we talked about before, having a tax credit that specifically helps those companies that are ready to increase productivity and create jobs in Ontario—that investment in tax credits is much more promising as a way to stimulate critical investments in plants and ma-

chinery, because they provide increased cash flow that is directly targeted to investment.

A training tax credit will reward employers who invest in on-job-training. If we want to create prosperity and ensure a strong economic future, people need to have the skills to perform the jobs. Having them retrained and giving them that tax incentive will help businesses get those highly skilled workers and keep the jobs here in Ontario, as opposed to having corporate tax cuts for those companies who poach our jobs.

Speaker, the way to go is not the same status quo; that's not working. We actually need to sit and think about changes that are going to make a difference, practical ways to get people back to work, and a practical thing to do is, if a job creator actually puts someone to work, that's when the reward should be given, not before.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Colle: I want to thank the member from Thornhill for his advice—

Mr. Peter Shurman: It's no problem. Any time.

Mr. Mike Colle: Okay. It's worth the price.

I just think it's a good opportunity, with this motion, to really discuss a very relevant and pragmatic issue that we face in Ontario, and that is people working and people that are unemployed and what we can do to find ways whereby government can do its role to ensure that we do everything we can to encourage employment growth.

I commend the NDP for bringing this forward, because it is important to have these hard looks at different approaches to this issue that we face in Ontario.

I have an interesting riding, which is a real microcosm of this issue. My riding has an area, the Upper Dufferin Village, which has some very, very unique manufacturers that have been in business—some go back six generations. They are still manufacturing; they're still in retail; they are still making things that are Canadian. I want to do everything I can to ensure that these Canadian employers, who employ Canadians, local people, and also export some of their products and have that made-in-Canada label on it, get all the help they can from government. I wish that somehow, looking at incentives like this tax credit incentive, we could incent those entrepreneurs, those businesses, that do manufacture products that are Canadian.

I have the iconic Roots factory still in my riding. It started in 1973. They employ about 200 people directly in the factory. They make boots, purses, jackets; they make all kinds of clothing apparel. Roots is really a Canadian success story. They even got the contract to supply the American Olympic team in the winter Olympics with all their outfits. They were wearing Roots outfits. That's a Canadian company. As you know, they also supplied the Canadian Olympic team with clothing apparel. Roots employs over 2,000 people in the GTA above the 200 people that manufacture in the plant on Caledonia, just north of Lawrence.

Those are the kinds of success stories that we have to take a lesson from. We have to encourage and support

that these Canadian-based companies are given all the support to employ more Canadians and to encourage Canadians to buy their products too.

I have another interesting example. I have an interesting maker of suits and shirts and clothing that employs about 130 people on Wingold Avenue. They make suits. They've got an amazing technology. What they do is, you can go to any shop and the tailor in the shop could measure you for a suit, send it by email on computer to the shop on Wingold Avenue, and they can make a tailor-made suit for you, all from the computer. The cutting of the suits and clothing is all done by computer by these incredibly talented people. Plus, they have people still sewing the old-fashioned way.

Do you know what the owner of that factory said? He said that the amazing thing is that the people he employs are people who would probably not be employed anywhere else but in that shop. Many of them, their English isn't perfect, but they are very highly skilled people. They're able to perform their craft right there in Toronto not far from their home.

Another company you may have heard of is Canada Goose. This is an iconic Canadian company that has had incredible success. You've seen the jackets all over the place. Canada Goose is now expanding into a bigger factory because they've been so successful in selling these Canadian-made coats all over the world. They are expensive. It's amazing to see kids spend 600 or 700 bucks for these coats, but they are Canadian made and they're a Canadian success story: Canada Goose.

Another example is Barrymore Furniture Inc. This is one of the finest furniture manufacturers, I think, in Canada. They employ all these craftspeople making Canadian furniture. It's a union shop. I think it's the United Steelworkers that are in there. They give people good wages, and it's an excellent, quality product.

I want to find a way of incenting and encouraging these kinds of factories to stay in business, expand and employ. We also have to ensure that we do whatever we can to support them, but also remind people that it's important to make that Canadian choice when we shop, and not enough of us do that.

I went to my local Home Hardware on Dufferin. Joe at the local Home Hardware said, "There's a good story for you." He said that there was a fertilizer product for lawns, and it really was the number one seller in Canada. It was Scotts, and it comes from Marysville, Ohio. He said that Home Hardware have a policy where they try and encourage Canadian-made goods. So they found a supplier—I think it's in Kitchener. I think it's Golfgreen or whatever the product is, but it's Canadian-made. It employs people. So Home Hardware is now selling the Canadian-made fertilizer, and they've increased sales of this product by \$10 million. That means that those people making that Canadian fertilizer—probably the potash comes from Saskatchewan or whatever. So there's an example. What Joe at Home Hardware was telling me was that he's noticing that people are coming in and saying—and that's not only his shop, but at Home

Hardwares all across Ontario—"Listen, we want the Canadian product," because they relate buying the Canadian product to Canadian jobs.

1710

Being in this place, I don't think we've ever sort of promoted that, whether it was a Conservative government or our government. We don't promote or support our Canadian expertise, our Canadian entrepreneurship, enough. We have to try and do whatever we can to encourage the crafting, and, you know, we shouldn't just judge products by—I love the fact that we've got our Canadian auto manufacturers. Even though they may make an American car, at least men and women are working here on our side making them. But we also have to go beyond that.

I know that as Canadians we are very, very innovative. I just think of another example. I remember there were these two sisters at Dupont and Ossington. They had a little bake shop in the back of a variety store; Mary is one sister, and I think the other sister is Grace. Anyway, from that shop they went to an industrial area with about 20 employees. They have just leased, I think, a new 20,000-square-foot factory to bake desserts, cakes, that will employ about 300 people. Those are good jobs and they are the finest products and we shouldn't diminish them because they are not hard products. They are products made by Canadians, Canadian artisans, and I think those are also employers or companies that deserve some kind of support for their initiative in giving people employment opportunities and giving people an opportunity to essentially manifest their skill set, their craft.

The one thing we have here in Ontario that I think is amazing is the talent level—okay, I'm about to finish—of our people. I mean, if you look around, whether it be construction, whether it be in the trades, whether it be in the creative arts that relate to employment, we've got people that are extremely talented. So we've got this amazing power of the human spirit who are skilled, who are willing to work, eager to work. As government, we have to find the best way possible of giving them that opportunity and also rewarding those who give people a chance to work, to show off their skill set, and make sure that they are able to feed their families and contribute to Canada, as they all want to do.

So I'm very interested in seeing ways that we, as the government, as this Legislature, can promote Canadian jobs, local jobs, and at the same time not encourage people to shop in Buffalo all the time. Shop on this side of the border. Save local jobs. Buy Canadian when you can. We can't stop all the Walmart shopping or all the Buffalo shopping, but please, shop more on this side of the border. Keep your money here; keep our jobs here. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Ms. Cindy Forster: I would like to talk a little about our tax credit motion that was put forward this morning by our leader.

In my riding, close to 12,000 manufacturing jobs had been lost over the last 14 years in the year ending 2010. The vast majority of jobs that ended up being created in that same 14-year period are retail, accommodation and service types of jobs—not jobs that are paying \$20 or \$25 an hour; likely jobs that are paying minimum wage, \$11 or \$12 per hour.

Jobs don't get created with corporate tax cuts, and they don't get created by decreasing regulation. They get created by investing in employees, in employees' training. I heard yesterday the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities saying that we have so many unskilled workers, 600,000 people laid off, but many of them don't have the skills to do the jobs that employers require. Well, in fact, the programs that this government has don't support 600,000 jobs. The Second Career program, for example, only supports 22,000 people, but we have 600,000 people unemployed here.

I heard the member from Thornhill talking about our differences in ideology as I came into the room here. Yes, we do have differences in ideology. I would say that, in fact, their cousins or their brothers and sisters at the federal level have just impacted that jobs crisis in an even more severe way. In fact, since 2006, the number of temporary workers has doubled in Canada, to 300,000 people.

I was reading an article today in the Hill Times from May 7, and you may want to go back and have a look at. In fact, the government has introduced immigration policies. They've actually changed the rules. There's no cap any longer on the four years that temporary immigrants can actually work in this country. When we talk about temporary immigrants, we're not talking about just the people who are working on our fruit farms during the summer. We're talking about people who work in nursing homes, people who work in our abattoirs, people working at Tim Hortons and Canadian Tire, people working at hotels, any workplace where employers say they can't find a Canadian employee who will work. Well, I can tell you, I have all kinds of friends and people in my riding who can't get a job in a number of these areas.

Disturbingly, they also set out a new announcement that wage rules won't apply to these temporary foreign workers. In fact, employers have the right to pay these temporary foreign workers 15% less than they would pay a permanent or Canadian worker. How much less can you get than minimum wage in some of these jobs? This is the PCs at the federal level who have actually introduced this new wage trend. It guarantees a downward trend to everyone, not just the people that are temporary workers.

The reforms didn't include a cap. The rule guarantees two things: (1) that the employers can minimize the cost of churn; and (2) a permanent temporary class of workers is created, keeping wages down and expectations low for everyone. So cheaper labour will benefit some employers in the short term, but in the long term it will affect our

economy. It will slow purchasing power and it will slow our growth to allow this to happen.

This year alone—actually, last year, 2011—191,000 temporary immigrant workers entered Canada, and they're working in those jobs that I just talked to you about. So I don't think that the Liberals' current plans by giving corporate tax cuts is working. I think you need to turn your mind to our tax credit plan, and I think that the Ontario PCs need to be talking to their partners at a federal level about what they're going to be doing to our economy.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'm pleased to stand today and talk about an issue that's important to my riding of Davenport and to ridings across the province, and stand in support of our leader, Andrea Horwath, who's talking about creating jobs in this province, and a real strategy that will deliver jobs here.

What we hear from both the government and the official opposition is basically the same old thing. We refer to it as neo-liberalism sometimes, or neo-conservatism, but there's nothing new about it. This is the same thing we've been talking about for 30 years, and it's not working. I think that the public is catching on. I think across Canada people know that this is not working, know that it's time to turn the page. Young people, in particular, know that there are no good jobs, and that we've lost billions of dollars in this kind of reckless corporate tax scheme. These reckless tax cuts have gone on for years, and it means that we, as young people, have to pay the price for that.

Young people graduating from school have record debt. They've paid more on their tuition than any generation before them. They come out and they have to work in the service industry, and they're lucky to make \$10.25 an hour. So we know it's not working, and we know we need to turn the page and do something different.

1720

I think that we need to think about a practical way to do this. The Minister of Economic Development was saying, "How are we going to do this? How are we going to pay for this jobs plan?" We know that we're giving away—last year it was \$2 billion, I believe, in corporate tax cuts that had no strings attached. We want \$250 million to support people who are actually going to create a job here in Ontario.

We've seen this neo-liberalism; we've seen this neo-conservatism. We've seen it under Liberals like Paul Martin. We see it now. We saw it with Thatcher 25 years ago. We've seen Milton Friedman. These are not new ideas. A new idea would be actually building a province that creates jobs here, that creates infrastructure. We can do this, but we need to pick a real, serious plan on how to do this.

I was interested to listen to the member from Thornhill talking about winners and losers and that the government should just get out of the way. What I see is a govern-

ment that has gotten out of the way and created a lot of people who are not winning in this province. I think we have a responsibility as government to stand up and to make sure that there are fewer people who are losing.

We want to share this—I'm a good sharer, and I'd like to share with my brother here in the third party, so I will extend my time to him.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak on this motion.

Let me start with some facts. I like to have some facts on the record, because I think it's important, as we're having a debate in this House, that we don't stray from facts, because facts don't lie; facts are straightforward.

So, a lot of talk about jobs, which is a very important conversation which I think is of interest to all of us, for the whole province of Ontario and for our specific communities. Where are we on jobs? Let's get that record straight. Speaker, since the recessionary low, employment in Ontario has grown by almost 300,000 net jobs, the majority of which are in industries paying above-average wages. The majority of them are also full-time jobs.

The unemployment rate has declined from a recessionary high of 9.4%. Remember, the recession started around 2008 and hit the peak in 2009, when Ontario saw an unemployment rate of 9.4%. That unemployment rate has declined to 7.4% today. Why? Because we are creating jobs because of the economic policies of the McGuinty government in the province of Ontario. Just last month alone, according to Statistics Canada, employment in Ontario rose by over 46,000 jobs—in March—all full-time, and more than half of the jobs that were created in Canada that month. So we are still the leading job creator in all of Canada by creating the majority of the jobs right here in the province of Ontario. Speaker, since October 2003, our economy has created about 555,000 net new jobs, and this is taking into account the jobs that were lost during the recession. So I think it's really important to note what is taking place.

There are all kinds of ideas about tax credits and what those tax credits should look like, and the idea that the NDP is putting forward is definitely worth looking at, no ifs, ands or buts about it. We need to make sure and see what the details of the idea are. We haven't heard any details from the NDP. I think that's the interesting part. We've spent this whole afternoon debating about the tax credit, but we just keep hearing the fact that we need a tax credit that will help job creators. Well, I agree; I think we all agree. But what does that mean? What does that tax credit look like?

We've already got a lot of tax credits on the books, tax credits like the film and television tax credit, which has created about 30,000 jobs in the province of Ontario. That helps create jobs. Do we support that or not? I think that's a valid question to ask.

We also have the apprenticeship training tax credit, which is helping apprentices across the province. That helps create jobs. I think it's worth looking at.

We have the co-op education tax credit. I'm sure the NDP supports the co-op education tax credit, because it really enables job creation within our sector.

We have the Ontario business research institute tax credit. We have the Ontario innovation tax credit. We have the Ontario research and development tax credit. We have the Ontario resource tax credit. And the list goes on and on. It's because all these tax credits are there to ensure that we are creating jobs.

So the idea is worth looking at, no ifs ands or buts about it, but let's figure out exactly the shape and form that idea is going to take. That is why we all agreed—the NDP and the Liberals agreed—to have the jobs and prosperity council look at this idea of a tax credit, which will help create jobs, and report back by February 2013.

Now, that's what we should be doing. Let's make decisions which are based on evidence. Let's just not get trapped in ideology and the socialism and capitalism discussion which has been taking place this afternoon. That doesn't help people, that doesn't help people at all. I think what people need to know is, "How is it going to help me," and the best way to determine that is by relying on evidence.

So let's get experts, who will be part of the jobs and prosperity council, to have a look at this tax credit and give us advice. We can then work together, as we agreed, to see what this tax credit may be and what it's going to achieve.

Now here's the big reason why I'm not going to support this particular motion. The reason is as follows: Where I come from, a deal is a deal is a deal. A deal was made between the NDP and the government to take this idea of a tax credit and study it further. Let's see what evidence shows us. Let's see how it is shaped—not let's run around that whole agreement and come up with a motion which says, "Create that tax credit now."

Now, you know, maybe I just have a better, more simple sense of what an agreement looks like. But an agreement is something that you agree on and then you follow through. I think in this case the NDP is not, in my humble opinion, playing fair when it comes to what was agreed on. Let's make sure that we have something that is put into place that is really going to work, because that was something we agreed on. So you stand for principle, you stand for fairness; I think that's fairly principled and fair.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: We stand for democracy.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: And democracy too. I think it's probably fair that in democracy, when two parties shake hands, we follow through on that.

I think what we're seeing is some abdication from that and trying to have it all ways, which is maybe okay for a third party to do—and they enjoy that prerogative. But you know what? Sitting on this side, when you've got the responsibility of governing, when you've got the responsibility of making decisions which are responsible, which

are fair and actually going to produce results and help people, it means that we ensure that we make decisions based on evidence.

So I say to you and I urge you—and that's my reason for not voting for this motion. I think it's worth looking into it. I look forward to what we agreed on; that is, the jobs and prosperity council to study this idea and give us advice. I think you should be honouring that part of the deal as well because I think that just makes you look good, because this does not really bode well for the NDP. I understand you have to play your own politics.

But you know what? On this side of the floor, we're not playing politics with people's lives. We're not going to play politics with people's jobs. We need to make sure that at the end of the day we are helping create the jobs. We are helping to grow our economy, like the way the jobs have been growing in this province; like how we created 46,000 new jobs in March; like how we have created 300,000 net new jobs since the recessionary high because of the economic policies that have taken place. That's what has been part of our budget to ensure that we are strengthening the economy, creating jobs and maintaining the gains in health care and education.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I want to thank the member for Ottawa Centre. He is indeed entertaining. I also want to congratulate him on the birth of his child yesterday and wish him all the best.

I am so pleased to talk about our tax credit for job creators because what we are proposing here is a shift. It's a change. It's out of the box. You guys got to listen very carefully.

It's getting away from the blind faith, closed-door, blinders-on, laissez-faire approach to tax code in the province. I want to talk to you about *laissez faire*, en français. The translation directly is "Let it be." It might be a really good Beatles song, but it is not good economic policy for the province. So what we're proposing here is very, very simple and the details are simple as well. You're a business, you're going to make a new hire, you're going to employ someone. We're going to help you: It's a \$5,000 tax credit to incentivize you taking on that person.

Here's what else it helps. It helps those who aren't ready to employ, those small businesses in our communities that really have reached their limit in terms of employment. How does it help them? Because there's another person in their community who now has a job, who gets to go and support their local small business. It's something that sounds simplistic but it actually can work.

Interjection.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Here are the details, member. It is very simple. Hire someone, get a tax credit—very different from what has been happening right now where you're giving money away to companies that are outsourcing, downsizing, offshoring their production, offshoring their labour sources. That is a slap in the face to the businesses in this province that are actually hiring. If

you vote against this bill today, you are voting against those business that are doing the things right in this province and taking on the burden in this province.

The member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan hit on Keynesian economics. He hit on a figure of structure spending on the province, \$80 billion—I forget the figure. It's real basic Keynesian economics. It involves an active, strategic approach. That's what we're talking about here: a government that is willing to do the lifting and to take a strategic approach in their tax code to make sure that people are getting value for dollar.

Also, we proposed another incentive that the government adopted: our modest tax increase on folks that are making over \$500,000 a year—supported by 78% of Ontarians. That's an idea that we got from our communities. This is another idea that we're getting from our business communities. It's something that you should really listen to, something that you can easily adopt, something that will have broad appeal and something that, ultimately, will work, something that hasn't been done by this Liberal government.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I will cede my time to the honourable leader of our party.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'm very proud to have had a chance to share this debate with my colleagues in the NDP caucus, people who are very concerned about getting somewhere in this province in job creation. Unfortunately, the Liberal way has not worked. We don't see the jobs being created; we see over 500,000 people still unemployed in this province. The HST has not worked. Across-the-board corporate tax cuts have not worked. It's very apparent we need to find a new way.

So yes, we did offer the Liberals a new way. And yes, in the conversation that we had around the budget, they said they'd consider it. All New Democrats are doing is realizing the history of the way the Liberals operate. We're reminding them today that they made a commitment. We want to see that committee struck, we want to see this tax credit implemented here in Ontario, and if they have the convictions that their Premier had when we struck that deal, they'll be supporting this motion, because it only reiterates what we already agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Horwath has moved opposition day motion number 4. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1734 to 1744.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Members take their seats, please. Thank you.

Ms. Horwath has moved opposition day number 4.

All those in favour of the motion, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Armstrong, Teresa J.
Bisson, Gilles
Campbell, Sarah
DiNovo, Cheri
Forster, Cindy
Gélinas, France

Horwath, Andrea
Mantha, Michael
Marchese, Rosario
Miller, Paul
Natyshak, Taras
Prue, Michael

Schein, Jonah
Singh, Jagmeet
Tabuns, Peter
Taylor, Monique
Vanthof, John

Craitor, Kim
Damerla, Dipika
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
Duguid, Brad
Duncan, Dwight
Elliott, Christine
Fedeli, Victor
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Gerretsen, John
Hardeman, Ernie

Mangat, Amrit
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McDonell, Jim
McKenna, Jane
McMeekin, Ted
McNaughton, Monte
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Miller, Norm
Milligan, Rob E.
Milloy, John

Sergio, Mario
Shurman, Peter
Smith, Todd
Sousa, Charles
Takhar, Harinder S.
Thompson, Lisa M.
Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim
Wong, Soo
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Yakubski, John
Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed to the motion, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Albanese, Laura
Balkissoon, Bas
Barrett, Toby
Bentley, Christopher
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Best, Margaret
Cansfield, Donna H.
Chan, Michael
Clark, Steve
Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant

Harris, Michael
Hillier, Randy
Hoskins, Eric
Jackson, Rod
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Jones, Sylvia
Klees, Frank
Kwinter, Monte
Leone, Rob
MacCharles, Tracy

Moridi, Reza
Munro, Julia
Murray, Glen R.
Naqvi, Yasir
Nicholls, Rick
O'Toole, John
Oraziotti, David
Piruzza, Teresa
Qaadri, Shafiq
Sandals, Liz
Scott, Laurie

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 17; the nays are 69.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negatived.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There is no further business. This House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1747.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre de Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development and Innovation / Ministre du Développement économique et de l'Innovation
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Deputy Premier / Vice-premier ministre Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Attorney General / Procureur général
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Milligan, Rob E. (PC)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Orazietti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Piruzza, Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Yakubski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	
Vacant	Kitchener–Waterloo	

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Rob Leone, Taras Natyshak
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David Zimmer
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Bill Mauro, Jim McDonell
Phil McNeely, Randy Pettapiece
Peter Tabuns, Monique Taylor
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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Shafiq Qaadri
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Lorenzo Berardinetti, Mike Colle
Frank Klees, Jack MacLaren
Paul Miller, Rob E. Milligan
Shafiq Qaadri
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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Gilles Bisson, Donna H. Cansfield
Steve Clark, Garfield Dunlop
Jeff Leal, Lisa MacLeod
Jonah Schein
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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des comptes publics**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Toby Barrett
Toby Barrett, France Gélinas
Phil McNeely, Norm Miller
Reza Moridi, Jerry J. Ouellette
Liz Sandals, Jagmeet Singh
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: John Vanthof
Michael Coteau, Grant Crack
Vic Dhillon, Randy Hillier
Rod Jackson, Mario Sergio
Peter Tabuns, John Vanthof
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ted Chudleigh
Ted Chudleigh, Dipika Damerla
Cheri DiNovo, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Ernie Hardeman, Tracy MacCharles
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
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of Ontario**

First Session, 40th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 40^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 9 May 2012

Mercredi 9 mai 2012



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 9 May 2012

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 9 mai 2012

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES
AMENDMENT ACT (RENT
INCREASE GUIDELINE), 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LA LOCATION
À USAGE D'HABITATION
(TAUX LÉGAL D'AUGMENTATION
DES LOYERS)

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 26, 2012, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 19, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 in respect of the rent increase guideline / Projet de loi 19, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur la location à usage d'habitation en ce qui concerne le taux légal d'augmentation des loyers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Thank you, Speaker, and thanks to our party's whip for telling me when to stand up. I appreciate that.

I'm happy to rise again this morning to speak briefly to Bill 19, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 in respect of the rent increase guideline.

Our party believes that there needs to be action that results in Ontario becoming more affordable for the people who live and operate a business in this province. Under the current government, we have seen the exact opposite, Speaker. Life is getting more expensive by the day. The debt continues to grow, along with the deficit, and Ontarians continue to suffer from the mismanagement of the Dalton McGuinty government.

Under this government, hydro rates have increased eight times since 2003, by a total of 84%. If you're a family with a smart meter at your home, well, you've seen your bill go up by a staggering 150%. A sad story out of my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex last week was the announcement of the closure of a retail store in my riding. During the campaign last year, this retail store told me that their hydro bill is \$20,000 a month, and three or four years ago, it was almost half of that. There were 75 jobs lost last week in my riding of Lambton-Kent-

Middlesex—a very sad day for those families, and this government is to blame for these job losses.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Questions and comments?

Hon. John Milloy: A few minutes ago, I had a chance to call the order, as members realize. I'd just like to put on the record that according to my notes here, we have spent 14 hours and 50 minutes debating this particular order, this bill, G19. I think all of us would agree it's time to move on to committee. But instead, what we've heard from the opposition is bell-ringing over and over and over again, not just on this bill but a whole series of bills.

This bill, through the rent increase guideline, the changes that it brings in, will protect tenants. It will actually allow landlords to better manage their planning, moving forward.

Mr. Speaker, there is some urgency in getting this legislation through, which is why we, on this side of the House, would like to see it go to committee. There will be an opportunity at committee for further debate and discussion—and delegations to come forward and speak on it, presumably, if the committee decides—an opportunity to look at the strengths and weaknesses of the bill. As always, there will be an opportunity to amend the bill and send it back.

But again, this is about protecting the rights of tenants but at the same time allowing landlords to operate within an acceptable framework that everyone understands. I really have to call the opposition to task and ask them why they're not allowing this piece of legislation to move forward. As I say, if the opposition wants to oppose this piece of legislation, that's their right, but the way to oppose it is to debate it, is to propose amendments in committee, is to put forward reasoned arguments, not to ring the bells over and over again.

Mr. Speaker, 14 hours and 50 minutes—for people who are unfamiliar with the Legislature, they may not realize that is an unprecedented amount of time on a bill that is relatively straightforward, a bill which strengthens rent guidelines for tenants. Again, I ask the opposition why they won't allow this bill to move forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes, I'm disappointed that the government House leader would not have addressed the remarks made by the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. In fact, the bill itself, Bill 19, is basically one paragraph long. What it does, actually, is not the dispute. The dispute here today, government House leader, is

really, why will you not respond to the call of the order of this House to have a select committee on the scandalous spending at Ornge helicopter? That's what the procedure's about. You're ignoring the real essence of the debate here this morning.

I can only say that the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex laid on the table an example of what this legislation means. We're quite prepared to go to committee; we're quite prepared to make sure that this becomes law, to create certainty for both tenants and landlords. That's all it does, basically: It lays out a calendar such that the rent review guideline would be not less than 1% and not more than 2.5%.

The essence of this discussion this morning is really more importantly about the scandalous, wasteful spending and the call of this House, the unanimous agreement within this House, including the Minister of Health, that you would have a select committee. But what you've done is you've really obfuscated the whole debate about that and not dealt with that at all. You've really not allowed us to have a select committee.

I'd lay out the question, if you get a chance to respond this morning: Why won't you? Is there something you don't want to get to the discussion on the public accounts committee? The member from Oak Ridges, Mr. Klees, who has led the discussion here, has made it very clear that there's evidence by some of the expert testimonial witnesses that said clearly there's been abuses. The police are investigating. There's more to this. There are people who were making millions of dollars. There are hundreds of millions of health care dollars wasted. That's why we want a select committee. Don't try to play games in this House this morning.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I just want to say generally that New Democrats don't have an opposition to this bill. We think, in fact, committee time would be in order, for us to be able to deal with this.

I want to make it clear for the record that New Democrats are not ringing bells. I sympathize with my Conservative counterparts in regard to their want to have a hearing on Ornge. I agree with them that, in fact, this is a scandalous situation and that we should be trying to shine the light on what has happened at Ornge so that, quite frankly, we can learn from whatever happened, whatever mistakes were made by the people who ran Ornge, so that we can plug the holes and not let that happen again.

I understand why the Conservatives are ringing bells. New Democrats aren't participating, and I want to put that on the record. When the government House leader gets up and says the opposition is ringing bells, I just want the record clearly to say that New Democrats are not ringing bells. We have said that, yes, we support the Conservatives in their bid to be able to get the Ornge committee, but we decided not to participate in the bell-ringing, and we do think this bill should go forward.

That being said, I think the government House leader should be hearing what the opposition Tories are trying

to tell him, which is that they have a serious concern, as we do, that in fact there should some form of hearing when it comes to the issue of Ornge. The government House leader will say, "Well, that's happening at public accounts." That's true for now, but it is going to come to an end in about three sessions of that committee over the next three weeks. What do we do after that? There's still the question of Mr. Mazza. Mr. Mazza has sent in a doctor's note saying he's not available until June 6. Will he send us another note? Will he refuse to appear on the Speaker's warrant?

All of those types of things are important to deal with, and I think there are still some people who need to be heard by this committee in order to explain what happened at Ornge so that we're able to learn and stop that from ever happening again.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Speaker, just to add some content in relation to Bill 19, Bill 19 does very little, if anything, to build affordable housing. We have an affordable housing problem in this province, and there is no affordable housing strategy by the Liberal government, God bless—nothing. So while this little thing caps rent increases and will help some people, there are 140,000 people overall on a waiting list to get public housing. Why? Because the majority of these people waiting have absolutely very little money—and that list is growing.

0910

I said 140,000, but I believe it's 146,000. It was 130,000 under the Conservative government. It's 146,000 under a Liberal government, because there is no housing strategy, and that's the tragedy of what we're debating. So although the Liberals make it appear as if somehow this is a big thing, it isn't. It's a tiny, little strategy in the scheme of things, and it doesn't tackle vacancy decontrol, a strategy left by the previous Conservative regime.

What does that vacancy decontrol mean? It means that when a tenant leaves, rents can be increased. And that continues as a strategy; it hasn't been dealt with. Landlords can still increase rents above the guideline if they demonstrate that they've had extraordinary increases around heating bills and other related stuff, so they could still get more. That doesn't deal with vacancy decontrol. It doesn't deal with the fact that landlords can still get more than the cap, based on other extraordinary circumstances. So they'll be okay. But the real tragedy is the lack of an affordable housing strategy that builds housing for those who are income-poor.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex has a two-minute reply.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'd like to thank the Minister of Community and Social Services and the government House leader, as well as my honourable colleague from Durham and my friends from Timmins-James Bay and Trinity-Spadina. I'd like to thank them very much for the comments. Again, it was good to rise today, I guess for my third time, on Bill 19, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 in respect of the rent increase guideline.

I guess the point I was making was that the government is doing absolutely nothing to create the environment for economic growth in this province. As I was saying a few minutes ago, hydro bills continue to come up on a daily basis when I'm home talking to small businesses in my riding. We had 75 jobs being lost last week in my riding with the announcement of a retail store closing. Their hydro bill is between \$18,000 and \$20,000 a month, and a few years ago it was about half of that.

Really, that's the issue: This government is introducing bills that make them appear that they're doing something, but in fact life is just getting more expensive for families in this province and for businesses across the province, and in particular in southwestern Ontario, where we're seeing jobs being lost every day, because this government has no plans to get people to work and to get life more affordable for families.

They're just not addressing the issues. They continue to deal with symptoms. We've been saying on this side of the House for a long time that it's time that the government wakes up, smells the coffee, gets to work for the people of Ontario and works with the other parties in this House to get people back to work and to make life more affordable.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure, as always, to stand here in the chamber and discuss something as important as house rental and the effects that has on everyone throughout the province of Ontario.

This is something that my esteemed colleague from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex alluded to, and that's the fact that what we're seeing from the government side of the House is them entering bills, introducing bills, that actually sound good, that actually appeal; they have very nice, flowery wording to them. It makes you feel really good inside and that they're actually doing something. But the real tragedy here is the simple fact that this bill doesn't address what Ontario really needs, which is jobs. We need jobs in Ontario. This government is doing very little to create those jobs.

We've also come across a debt crisis. We're seeing the provincial deficit this year grow exponentially—within the next five years, up to \$30 billion in deficit. This is going to have an adverse effect on the services that we as a government provide to Ontarians and how we can deliver those services in a timely, efficient and well-meaning manner. So I have certain issues with this bill.

As the member from Trinity-Spadina alluded to, as did my esteemed colleague from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, people are struggling here in the province of Ontario. They're losing their jobs. They're trying to find jobs. Housing, obviously, is something that is a necessity. It's important to have a building around you with a roof where you can actually grow as a family within a community.

This bill does not actually help the residents of the province of Ontario, and this is where I'm concerned, be-

cause as you well know, young people, the future of this province, who are not living in housing, who don't have that opportunity, are finding it very difficult. As my esteemed colleague the member from Durham also alluded to, this bill is being held up not by us but by the government, which is non-compliant with the simple fact that we are calling for a select committee because of Ornge.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Obstruction.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Obstruction. Thank you very much, Mr. Whip.

The health minister herself stood up in this chamber and said that she would comply with the will of the Legislature. My colleague friends to the left here and we, the PC caucus, voted unanimously to form a select committee. That's how democracy works: the will of the people. We are the voice of our residents, our constituents. Until the government realizes and respects that will, we are going to continue to ring bells. We are going to continue to obstruct any further legislation that comes forward, because that's all we have. The will of the people is not being adhered to, so we're fighting on behalf of our residents, our constituents who want to see progressive movement forward in job creation and a strategy to fight our deficit, which is going to reach \$30 billion.

We don't have to worry about flowery legislation like Bill 19 and rent increases when there's going to be nobody who can afford to rent or own property because this government is basically destroying the backbone of what Ontario is, what it was: the great engine of Confederation, the economic engine that our forefathers and mothers worked very hard to make, a legacy and a future for younger generations coming up, the young people.

You know, Mr. Speaker, as a former educator myself, history and English were the areas that I taught. As a historian, we have to look at the past in order to map out our future. We cannot forget the people, the individuals who came before us who laid the foundation of this great province, who had a vision of what Ontario could be, what Ontario can be, but what we are not currently. So although Bill 19 deals vaguely with the housing issue, as I alluded to earlier, there are going to be more and more individuals who are going to find it difficult, without a job, to live in a home, to find a rental property.

0920

When I was campaigning—and again, the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex alluded to this as well—one of the things I heard very, very often at the door was the exorbitant price of electricity, the skyrocketing price of utilities, and how they were struggling to make ends meet at the end of the month. More and more, it became difficult. People had to choose.

There is an elderly couple in the town of Brighton. It saddened me greatly, because here's a couple who—actually, the wife's father built the home in which they resided, in which, when they got married, grew their family; their children grew up in that residence. As I sat at their kitchen table, I felt sorry for the husband and wife, who almost broke down into tears because they had to choose between selling their home—because they

couldn't afford it on a fixed income, because their property taxes were too high and their utilities were too high. They figured that the savings that they had were being eroded under this current government and their policies.

It was a sad day for me, but I realized that I was, therefore, getting involved on their behalf. I was going to be a strong voice at Queen's Park. That day, I realized these could be my parents. They don't have a big, splashy pension; they don't have a large bank reserve. How are they going to make ends meet?

This bill, I have to say, is nothing more than window dressing. People are struggling, and if this government insists on supporting and propping up scandals like eHealth, like Ornge, and lining the wallets of their friends and inner circle—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I would ask the member to stick to the script. You're wandering a little bit. Thank you.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just have to say that when the government House leader says that we don't want to work, that we're not willing to work on behalf of Ontarians, it's just the opposite. We're here to work for them. We're the strong voice for our constituents who don't have a voice. For that elderly couple in Brighton, I'm proud to say that I'm here to obstruct what this government is doing to them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Speaker, I agree with the member from Northumberland—Quinte West on a couple of things. The two areas that he speaks about are affordability issues—because we have an affordability crisis that the Liberals haven't, of course, dealt with—and the other one is that we need to create jobs, and he's right on that. The question is how we get there, and this is where we have a disagreement with the Conservative Party.

On the issue of affordability, he's quite correct in speaking to it. Here's what I say that nobody talks about in either of the two parties, Liberal and Conservative, which is that according to the 2000 census, 45% of Ontario tenant households paid 30% or more of their household income on shelter costs. One in five, or 20%, of Ontario tenant households paid 50% or more of their household income on shelter costs. That speaks to the affordability crisis that we have in this province and in the country, and we are not dealing with that. The Liberals, should they at some point want to create jobs, could start the building of non-profit housing, co-operative housing. That would spur the economy, that would create jobs, and that would begin to deal with the fact that—and I said 146,000 people are waiting for public housing. There are 152,000, so that list is bigger than I had imagined. That is the way to create jobs, but the government has no strategy around it.

I want to make another point to the Liberals and to the Conservatives: There are exemptions to rent controls and those exemptions are in the Residential Tenancies Act, section 2, and that was passed in 1998, which means a whole lot of rental units are exempt from rent control.

That was intended to spur development in the private sector. It's not happening. We need to create housing. It would create jobs and raise revenues, and that's what the Liberals should focus their attention to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I'm glad to add my comments to the conversation here. This is a routine bill, and I think we all agree that it's a necessary bill. I don't understand why the opposition has been holding it up. You're holding up the opportunity for landlords and for tenants to benefit. We're here to work for our constituents, so we should get on and get this bill to committee and continue to work and make it better, if that's the intent.

I think we all know that while the rent increase guideline formula has worked well in the past, the recent fluctuations in Ontario's consumer price index have resulted in a 2012 guideline that doesn't reflect the economic circumstances of those who rent. That's why, in response, the government has introduced this bill, Bill 19, that, if passed, is going to amend the annual rent increase guideline formula to ensure that the rent increase guideline will be capped at 2.5% and would never fall below 1%. The guideline would continue to be based on the Ontario consumer price index, and what it would mean is that by not falling below 1%, it would offer landlords some security, and by not going above 2.5%, the guideline would also offer some reassurance, stability and affordability to renters.

This is something that we need to do for our constituents who are renting. We need to move on past this stage. I would urge the opposition to sincerely consider that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jonah Schein: I've spoken to this bill already on another day, but I'm happy to speak to it again.

I think the issue of real rent control is something that's extraordinarily important in my community, across the city of Toronto and across Ontario. I remember back in the 1990s when rent control was really gutted by the previous government and the real implications. It meant more people were living on the street in the city and more people couldn't feed their families. In a lot of ways, we've never recovered from that.

We do need, as my colleague from Trinity-Spadina said, to address the affordable housing situation in this city. I don't feel like we're having a debate on this. I'm not trying to hold up the debate—just to put it on the record that, as my friend from Trinity-Spadina said, this is a small bill. This goes just a tiny, tiny bit forward in what needs to be. We need to make some big steps around affordable housing in this province.

As he mentioned, the issue about vacancy—there's no rent control when there is a vacancy in this city, in this province. It's a huge problem, and it means that there are tenants who get bullied out of their accommodations so that rents can go up. We are living in a housing bubble right now, in a housing crisis. The fact that prices in this

city and across the province are going up every single year at a huge rate means that, at some point, we're going to have a huge problem here for tenants when interest rates go up, and we need to make sure that we're thinking in advance about this. We've put forward policies around building affordable housing in Ontario. In our last platform, we talked about zoning for new affordable housing, and we need to make real strides on this issue.

It's interesting that both the government and the official opposition have talked about freezing wages in this province, but they won't freeze rents. I think that's really unfortunate, that real wages are not going up but rents continue to go up in Ontario.

0930

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. John Milloy: I'm pleased to comment on the presentation made by my colleague across the way. Again, just to pick up on the theme of this bill, this bill is about protecting tenants. It's also about making sure that landlords have the information they need, the framework they need, so that they can properly plan and that we have that equal relationship that we strive for in all our movement towards housing.

Mr. Speaker, I noted earlier that this is a very straightforward bill. It's a bill that's very important to a lot of people, yet the opposition party is not allowing it to go through. They're constantly ringing bells and engaging in delaying tactics.

I do want to put on the record, because I heard my friend the NDP House leader stand up in his questions and comments to an earlier speech, that when I talk about the opposition, I'm talking about the Progressive Conservatives. Certainly, from the New Democratic Party, we've seen a willingness to move forward with this.

As I say, this is an important piece of legislation. The opposition has every right to oppose this legislation, but the way to properly oppose it is to enter into debate, to send it to committee and there have an opportunity, if the committee desires, to hear from witnesses and to put forward the types of amendments going forward.

I hear this constant rendition from the PCs that this is about an inability to look into the Ornge situation. Again, I want to put on the record that the government shares concerns about what's happened in Ornge. That's why we've had the Auditor General look at it. We've welcomed his report. The OPP is investigating it, with the encouragement of the Minister of Health. The public accounts committee, a standing committee of this Legislature, which has all the tools and powers it needs to look into it, is in fact holding hearings into it as we speak this morning, which I suspect is why we're not having bells from the PCs. At the same time, there's another piece of legislation before this House with which, if it should pass second reading, there would be more opportunity to look at Ornge and ways to make sure that the framework is strengthened.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Northumberland—Quinte West has a two-minute reply.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As the government pointed out there, they want things to move along. But really, again, I have to say it's all talk. It's background noise, if you will. It's not really addressing what the heart of the matter is and what we're doing.

To my NDP colleagues, the members from Davenport and Trinity—Spadina, everything is rosy over there for the NDP—God bless. But the fact of the matter is that if people had jobs, they could afford rent. This government has done nothing to create jobs and address the deficit that we're facing. It's a crisis.

Therefore, we want to introduce legislation that's going to create jobs here in Ontario. We're going to implement legislation that's going to address the debt crisis that we're facing, to get Ontario back on its feet so that people will be able to afford housing, as my NDP colleague really wants to. But it's our approach, Mr. Speaker. Only the PC caucus has the correct approach on how to get Ontario back to do that. Tim Hudak has laid out the foundation of how we're going to move forward—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Member from Trinity—Spadina.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Bill 19, although it talks about rental housing and how it's going to improve the lives of individuals—as I alluded to, it does nothing. Only Tim Hudak and the PC caucus have that plan. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to join the debate today for Bill 19, the Residential Tenancies Amendment Act. I have to give a nod to my colleagues from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex and Northumberland—Quinte West. They have been spot-on with their comments.

We all know this particular bill is the result of the HST, the largest tax grab in Ontario's history. But before we jump right into this, I want to speak to the fact that my colleague and the member from Timmins—James Bay mentioned that this bill really does very little to build affordable housing.

Much like the member from Northumberland—Quinte West alluded to, this is very much a chicken-and-egg issue. Why are people looking for affordable housing? It's because they can't afford the bills. It's because they do not have jobs. In my riding, jobs are disappearing every time you turn around. They closed the Walkerton jail. They took away the Bluewater Youth Centre, just south of Goderich. We've lost manufacturing like crazy over the last eight years due to the exorbitant costs of operating in the Liberals' Ontario as we've come to know it today—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I would ask the member to stick to the bill. We're wandering a little bit. Thank you.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: The fact of the matter is, because we've lost our manufacturing jobs, because we're losing jobs in our riding, people can't afford to live any longer. Mr. Speaker, this is very, very pointed. And you know what? It also speaks to a comment that was

made by the member from Trinity–Spadina. He said the government has no strategy around jobs and affordable housing and making life easier and more affordable in Ontario today, and I totally agree with that.

That actually expands over to my motivation to seek representation of the riding of Huron–Bruce. Not only does the government not have a strategy for affordable housing and making life easier in Ontario, but this government is totally void of a strategy and a vision for rural Ontario as well.

Interjection: A lack of leadership.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: It proves to be a lack of leadership, as my friend here said.

It points to the fact that this bill really doesn't play into overall effectiveness in the big picture. We know that too many Ontarians, 1.3 million tenant households, are stretched to the limit trying to pay their household bills, including their rents. These bills are exorbitant.

I just can't say enough about United Way. This past winter, United Way came forward and did their job. They're a great organization. They helped people pay their bills so that they could stay in their house.

And you know what's sad? Now that the winter has come and gone, those same people can't afford to keep their lights on. My constituency offices in Kincardine and Blyth are being called on a regular basis by people who can't keep the lights on. They don't have the money. They don't have a job. Life is unaffordable.

So this issue spans beyond affordable housing; it's about affording life in today's Ontario, with the lack of leadership demonstrated by the Liberal government.

We all know that this is a problem faced by those who actually are waiting on affordable housing. There are 140,000 people on a list, and this bill isn't going to help them. Some 32% of tenants have accommodations that fail to meet standards of adequacy, suitability and affordability. These numbers are up and will continue to rise across this province as Ontario fails to deal with this economic stagnation, the loss of the industrial sector.

Mr. Speaker, I ask, because it's getting frustrating, when is our government actually going to understand what the root of this whole problem is? Over 600,000 Ontario men and women are out of work, with skyrocketing energy prices, significant increases to—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Folks, there seem to be four sidebars going rather loud. It's your member who's speaking, and two of the sidebars of the Conservative members are rather loud. I would like to hear what she's saying. If you have a problem, take it outside. Thank you.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure the sidebars are over the fact that this bill really does nothing to address the root cause, which is affordable housing. Bill 19, as I said, does nothing to deal with those core issues that are making life so unaffordable in Ontario.

Affordable housing: There is a crisis out there, and you don't have to stick to urban Ontario; go right across this province and there's nothing there for these people

except to wait to get into some sort of housing. We have hundreds of thousands of people without work, while the HST and soaring hydro rates, along with increased fees, are eating away at what little disposable income people have.

0940

Under Dalton McGuinty, it's important to note, hydro rates have increased eight times since 2003, for a total of 84%—totally shameful. If you're a family with a smart meter at your home, well, you've seen your hydro bill go up a staggering 150%. When I knocked on doors in my riding of Huron–Bruce during the past election, I can assure you that the top issues people wanted to talk about were jobs and the cost of living. I ask, when is this government finally going to get it?

Like me, the tenants' groups note that this legislation won't really change a thing. It's an attempt by the government to really be seen as doing something at a time when I believe real, substantive change is necessary. It's quite ironic that this government has crafted a piece of legislation aimed to narrow-cast a message to such a select group of stakeholders, even as the group they're trying to appease has called it a failure.

You know what? Speaking about failure, I would be remiss if I didn't take this opportunity to touch on the absolute failure of this Liberal government with regard to acknowledging the will of the people and to follow through on what the Minister of Health said she would do—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member is drifting again. We're not talking about health; we're talking about lodging.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you, Speaker. Failures are failures, and we have to take this opportunity to utilize the tools at our disposal to demonstrate the fact that this government isn't listening. We won't stop until they do the honourable thing and strike a select committee on Ornge. It is the right thing to do.

Coming back, in terms of the right thing to do, this bill that we're debating today will do nothing, absolutely nothing, to address the ongoing maintenance issues that plague social housing units. It's estimated that there's a \$3-billion repair backlog. When is that going to be addressed? Because it is indeed, again, the right thing to do. This government simply hasn't made the right investments.

But there's more when it comes from groups who wish to seek reform. I feel that this legislation is actually the result of the HST. That has had a very significant impact on people who have houses or apartment buildings. It's obviously an impact on the tenants. It's that ripple effect that flows down, and at the end of the day, the only shoulders left to carry this burden are the taxpayers'.

Let's talk about the HST. For an example, I just got the snow removal bill for my office. I was taken aback at how expensive that is getting. We've had a warm winter, yet due to the HST and the added cost of operating, those operators have to pass that expense along, so at the end of the day, it hits the end-user. This is what the real problem is.

We can talk about the tenancy act, but it's about affordability. It's about maintaining and managing the cost of living. It's about making life just a little bit easier in Ontario. The fact of the matter is, the PC caucus has warned the government about the risk of the HST and the new costs that it would impose on landlords. Again, those new costs ultimately land on the shoulders of the people who we're trying to represent here in this chamber. The McGuinty Liberals have ignored the warnings. They have pushed the new cost on landlords, leaving them, as I said, with no choice but to raise rents.

So often, it seems that this government's attitude is to let somebody else take the blame or to pick up the bill and pay for it. The Progressive Conservative caucus, led by Tim Hudak, has repeatedly warned the government of the risk of Ontario's rental housing stock deteriorating with the additional costs of the HST, on top of the risk that small landlords might get out of the business altogether. The impact of energy increases—we all know where that's going. It's leaving nothing in the pockets of ordinary Ontarians.

Mr. Speaker, we have to encourage this government to develop a strategy, take the chips where they lay and understand that we need jobs, we need affordability, and they need to be doing a better job to address the real issues in this province today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions? Comments?

Miss Monique Taylor: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to stand, in the matter of the member from Huron–Bruce, and to just comment.

She's saying that the job creation would solve the issues of the rent increase here that's happening in the province. You know, the job creation that is happening in this province is part-time jobs, contract jobs, minimum wage jobs, so that's not going to help with the housing issue.

A rent increase is going to hurt everyday folks. We know that this is happening. For people in Hamilton Mountain, to get a bachelor apartment, it's currently \$510 a month, and that's cheap compared to Toronto, but a person on Ontario Works is making \$599 a month, so figure it out.

We had to beg for a 1% increase for those folks on Ontario Works, but we're allowing a 2.5% increase on the rent. This isn't working. We need affordable housing; that's where this bill has to come back to. It's not about how much we're going to allow the rent to increase; it's about what we're going to do about the big picture as a whole.

The member also mentioned the HST and how that's affecting folks with the hydro. Yes, that's why we brought forward a bill to take the HST off home heating, to make it easier for folks in their homes to be able to deal with everyday life, because it is too hard in Ontario.

Hopefully, when we get this bill to committee, we can make some amendments to make it a little better.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'm looking at some of the average rent increases in between 1975 and 2012. Do you know, Speaker, under the watch of which government the rent increases have been the lowest? That would be the Liberal government. And under which government were the rental increases the highest? That would have been the NDP. So I think it's actually time to call a spade a spade here.

Among the things our government has done, not merely in this bill but in the others—you know, in the last month for which figures were available, Ontario created 46,000 net new jobs—overwhelmingly full-time, high-value jobs. And with the overhaul of Ontario's tax system, one of the other things that we're able to see, particularly in my neighbourhoods in western Mississauga, has been the renaissance of high-value manufacturing. These are the things that are helping put Ontarians back to work, and that's what we're really here to do.

One of the things that this bill offers people, besides moderate rent increases, is something that they don't get on the other side, which is hope. We're offering people hope, hope of a decent future, hope of a great job, the ability to retrain—it's hope. The rent increases in the last several years are just another manifestation of it. Starting from 2003: 2.9%, 2.9%, 1.5%, 2.1%, 2.6%—none of the increases were in the threes and the fours. It's moderate, it's reasonable and it works.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I enjoyed the address by my colleague from Huron–Bruce. Hopefully, I'm going to get a little latitude here, because the government House leader has been given quite a bit of latitude with his dissertations this morning.

I just want to explain a little bit about the standing orders of the House here, Mr. Speaker. When a bill comes before this Legislature, every member has the right to speak to that bill, and the members of the PC caucus are exercising that right that is granted to them by the standing orders of this Legislature. If the government House leader wants to put forward changes to those standing orders, let's hear about it.

But they also have the right to invoke closure or time allocation motions to any bill. They can do that to this bill, as they can with any bill, just as they did with Bill 13, the Accepting Schools Act. They brought a time allocation motion to the House, and then they subsequently withdrew it because there was a deal made to speak about Bill 14 and Bill 13 at the same time. Notice I said "Bill 14 and Bill 13." You might expect me to say 13 and 14, but the reason I say Bill 14 and Bill 13 is that Bill 13 is now in committee, and the government is hearing in boxcar letters from almost every deputation that the bill they want to see brought forward is Bill 14, because it is the one that actually tackles the issue of bullying in our schools.

0950

To the point of the government House leader and why we continue to speak to bills, it is our right, but, yes, we

have made it absolutely crystal clear that until this government stands by its word and promises made to this House, we will continue to use what arrows we have in the quiver until they bring forth a select committee on Ornge, or at least accept a change in the terms of reference for the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It's very likely that the member from Huron-Bruce will agree with me on this: Bill 19 is so minuscule as to be almost utterly insignificant. But that's what Liberals are good for, and they are exemplary in that regard.

Here's one of the little problems: Liberals have created very little affordable housing. That's why the list of people waiting to get into affordable housing is 152,000. Liberals, in eight and a half years, have not created one single co-op—not one co-op—something that in the accord, of which the member from Mississauga-Streetsville mentioned little—in the accord of 1985 to 1987, we built a huge number of co-ops that a lot of Liberals like, I think.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Scarborough-Rouge River might want to get back in his seat if he wants to make comments.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: So not one single co-op has been built in the Liberal regime.

Secondly, vacancy decontrol as it relates to Bill 19 means the following: When a tenant moves into another building, of all the three million tenants that we've got, when they move from one to the other, the landlord can increase rent at whatever level he or she wants. So this bill has practically no effect at all, and none of the Liberals speak to it because I suspect most of you are not aware of it, to be fair—and I say this uncritically.

Thirdly, exemptions: New buildings—and the government doesn't give figures for this—are exempt from rent control. So your Bill 19 has utterly no effect on those buildings whatsoever. You don't speak to that, because I suspect most of you are not aware of that, and I don't say that critically, but you're not aware of it. So this bill has no effect on that either. It would be good to speak to that, and I wonder whether the member from Huron-Bruce agrees with me on that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Huron-Bruce has two minutes to reply.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: To my colleague from Trinity-Spadina, I do agree with you that this bill really is minuscule, and at the end of the day with regard to the big picture, it really doesn't have a big impact. In terms of affordable housing, again, I talk about the fact that this is a chicken-and-egg issue. The fact is, people need affordable living. The cost of living is going through the roof. Again, when people come calling in our constituency offices in Blyth and Kincardine, it's about being able to pay the bills. That concept and that worry com-

pletely is missed by the government of the day, and that is sad.

Because of that, I totally agree with the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke as well. Because of that, because the government is totally void of a strategy and totally negligent in terms of listening to the will of the people, we do have the right to stand up and express what really matters. To that end, I find it interesting that the member from Mississauga-Streetsville spoke to the fact that in terms of what matters to him, he had to realize that the highest rent was actually realized by the NDP government. It's interesting to learn.

But what struck me most was a comment made by our colleague from Hamilton Mountain. She referenced the cost of rent. She made me think of my nephew, actually. He's a recent graduate in the film industry, and he wants to move downtown. You know, the cost of living is just exorbitant. Think of those young people who are just trying to get started. This young gentleman by the name of Kyle Detzler, from Teeswater, Ontario: His short film has been nominated to be marshalled at the Toronto International Film Festival—incredibly proud. But do you know what? Life is going to be so expensive for this young gentleman of 23 years of age. How is he ever going to get started? At the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, we need affordable living, and that's how he and others will get ahead.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Jack MacLaren: I rise today to speak to the government's Bill 19, the Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2012. This is a simple proposal by the minister to limit yearly rent increases for tenants across the province to between 1% and 2.5%. No matter what the consumer price index indicator is in a given year, the guideline would have a floor and a ceiling as mandated by the ministry.

This is a proposal that is both unnecessary and detrimental to the rental housing sector. I speak today against this bill, and my comments will outline why I think this bill is a bad bill that should not pass second reading.

In Carleton-Mississippi Mills, the riding I represent on the west side of Ottawa, which includes the fast-growing community of Kanata, we have many tenants. Since I was elected in October, I have worked on behalf of tenants who are constituents. The system can be very difficult for them navigate, so I've been there to help them a bit, as I would help any constituent. Government has become too large and cumbersome, and government has too much control over the private relationship between a tenant and their landlord. I'm also in contact with landlords who have to deal with the government in the way tenants do.

There is much that can be done to improve the situation for our privately owned rental housing sector in Ontario. As I mentioned, I'm opposed to Bill 19. I cannot support the minister's proposal for the following reasons: (1) this is a bill by a government trying to give the appearance they're doing something substantial for ten-

ants at the expense of landlords; and (2) this is a bill that attempts and fails to roll back some of the negative effects of the HST on the rental housing sector in Ontario for both tenants and landlords.

Bill 19 comes at a time when the cost of living is going up for tenants. Bill 19 comes at a time when the cost of running a business is going up for landlords. Bill 19 is the wrong bill at the wrong time. I will outline later what the government could have done to improve tenant-landlord legislation.

First, this is a bill by a government trying to give the appearance that they're doing something substantial for tenants at the expense to landlords. To put a floor and a ceiling into the province's yearly rent increase guideline calculation will not help tenants. The last time the province's rent increase guideline was above 2.5% was in 2007, and for the last 18 years, it has never been over 3%. In historical context, this is very low. In the 1970s, the average increase guideline was 8%, quadruple what it has been recently.

Nowadays, a tenant's ability to pay is well protected by the fact that the guideline is now legislatively tied directly to the consumer price index. Further, Bill 19 would result in a false economy. This move proposed by this government bill would not produce substantially lower costs for tenants, only a few dollars saved per year. This government wants to appear to be on the side of tenants, however hollow the results.

In contrast to any small, positive effect a tenant may feel, the landlord would feel negative effects on a much larger scale. Running an apartment building as a business is a large-scale, costly operation, particularly if the building is older. A landlord whose cost recovery would be restricted by this bill would start to reduce his or her costs to adjust for this new law. The landlord would be tempted to postpone annual maintenance work.

Bill 19 is a proposal for more over-lawing, an extension of McGuinty's nanny state: over-regulation of a private business, over-regulation of the free market, expecting landlords to be charitable when they are running a business. It's a business, not a charity. It's the free market economy, not an extension of social housing. The market is either free or it's not. Under this government, it is not nearly as free as it should be. They habitually pass out taxpayer money to subsidize what the market doesn't support.

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The rental housing sector and its dwindling housing stock are part of our free market, regardless of the government's policies. It's a part that is particularly over-governed. The province's stock of rental housing will continue to dwindle as long as it is not a full part of a free market economy. If the market sees over-regulation and does not see reasonable profit to be made, it will not invest. Landlords provide a private service. Landlords don't provide a public service, and should not be treated as such.

Second overall, this is a bill that attempts and fails to roll back some of the negative effects of the HST on the

rental housing sector in Ontario for both tenants and landlords. The HST has increased the cost of many things by 8% that used to be only subject to the 5% GST. The Progressive Conservatives tried to steer this Liberal government clear of the HST. We told them it would hurt tenants and landlords alike. Costs have gone up for both tenants and landlords, just like we said they would. This is a government that won't listen.

This government could have helped businesses streamline their tax reporting in a way other than harmonizing sales taxes, a way that would have protected businesses and consumers from increased costs due to taxation. But they chose to continue with their spinoff scheme to reap even more taxes from you and me. The HST is nothing more than a one-size-fits-all bureaucratic measure that hits consumers where it hurts, and at the expense of business owners. People can buy fewer things if they have less money in their pocket. This government has become good at extracting after-tax dollars from our pockets. When the Liberals don't get enough from our income taxes, they slap on special taxes. This has been the story since the Liberals were elected in 2003. The HST is the latest chapter.

The overarching, overlying effect of this bill is wrong. I will not be voting for this bill, and neither will my caucus colleagues. Tampering with and hampering private business affairs should not be encouraged and, if possible, left out entirely.

Instead of Bill 19's focus, I know government could have brought forward other amendments to the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006. This bill seems to be a political move, one that is more smoke than mirrors, but one that plays well to their base of support. The government could have focused on streamlining how the Landlord and Tenant Board works by changing the administrative and legal regime and having proper recordings of the proceedings so cases could move faster and there is less room for error.

Another amendment could have been to reduce taxes on money a landlord puts into a capital reserve fund for his or her property. What about eliminating the HST for a landlord's business costs and a tenant's housing costs? These other measures would help reduce government's involvement in the privately owned rental housing sector. These measures would get government out of the way of the business of providing goods and services for a fair cost.

In closing, I remain opposed to this legislation, Bill 19, the Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2012. It is a bad apple and should be thrown out. In support of both tenants and landlords, I add my voice against over-regulation, against false hope by false economy, and I add my voice against government interfering with the free market. I will be voting against this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: What I like about the member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills's speech is that it is undiluted Conservative ideology. It's clear and it's clean,

and I disagree with it completely, but at least it's clear. The point is that he supports this free market system: there ought not to be any regulations as it relates to the rental market. We disagree with that. There are times when, if we do not impose regulations on the free market system, they collapse the whole economy. They collapse countries, as we've seen in the US, with the ripple effects across the world. Free markets don't work. We cannot let them do what they want, and that's why regulations are a big part of who we are as government.

I want to say this: Rental landlords have been getting—let's not call them "caps"—the increases of 2% or 3%, whatever CPI existed, for a long, long time. It doesn't mean that landlords spent that in maintenance. I always believed that wasn't the case. If they were using those regular increases for maintenance, those buildings would be well maintained, but they don't use it for that purpose, one. Secondly is my argument—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Some may but many do not. They use that as further investment in other rental buildings or now condo buildings.

They are allowed to apply to the Landlord and Tenant Board for extraordinary expenses. So when you've got increases—heat, increases of this kind, hydro or heating bills—they can apply to the Landlord and Tenant Board and they probably will get those increases. The market still works for them, and the law allows them to get those regular increases.

This bill is a little bill. It doesn't do much. It's better than nothing, and we've got to do more.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I'm pleased to just add a few comments to the speech made by the member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills, and I listened to him very attentively. To be honest with you, I was not surprised at his comments, because he has been very consistent since he arrived here with his tone of voice in terms of the free market and less regulation and no government. Probably, if you asked him if he supports democracy, he would probably say no.

But regardless of that, we have a bill in front of us—I've been here just over six years; every year this particular piece of legislation comes forward, and we routinely adopt it. But this year, for some reason, we're sitting here debating it, and I think we're almost close to 15 hours and we're just going in circles and circles. Our friends across the way have rang the bells consistently over the last couple of weeks, and we're not getting the job done that the public sent us to do.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: The public wants an inquiry.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: My friend across the hall is shouting at me that they want an inquiry. Fair ball, you want an inquiry, but why should you hold up what the public is asking us to do? We should do it.

To be honest with you, Mr. Speaker, tenants out there need this piece of legislation so that they can benefit from the actions that are being taken by this bill to limit

rent increases in our community to help those who are in need. It also helps landlords so that they know what they can expect in rent increases so that they can carry on their business. But unfortunately, we sit here and we debate this bill over and over because the opposition party is ringing the bells on a continuous basis. But you notice this morning it's Wednesday; they did not ring the bells.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'm pleased to stand and speak to the member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills, and I do support much of what he says.

I was a child of the 1960s. When I graduated from college in 1968, I had a job to go to before I even got out of school. And I actually do remember most of the 1960s, which is something I'm very proud of. Anyway, when I graduated, I had a job to go to, which a lot of people don't have right now. We have somewhere around 600,000 people unemployed in this province, and that's the core of this problem. People need to have an income to pay their rents.

We have introduced ideas to the government, and they just flatly rejected our ideas, such as changing the apprenticeship system. We feel there are 200,000 jobs available there. We also want to change the energy policy to make it more affordable for people and businesses to flourish in this province. But again, we keep being rejected by them.

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I've been lucky all my life. I've only been unemployed I think for a total of three months in my whole lifetime. When I stopped farming and started to work with my wife in her business, we were fortunate to raise three sons, and they are all on their own and doing quite well, thank you. But there's still the 600,000 people that don't have that opportunity.

We've always taken great pride in that we've always been able to pay our rent, if we were renting, or our mortgage payments. That's what people want; they want a sense of pride in what they're doing. I think the real problem here is that the opportunity for real, meaningful work in this province has eroded—just too many people. I think that's the real crux of this problem.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. John Milloy: I just want to put on the record again the fact that this is a very important bill for tenants, this is a very important bill for landlords, when we're talking about their ability to manage their relationship and manage as they move forward.

Mr. Speaker, I find it passing strange that we've heard from the official opposition, the Progressive Conservatives, as well as the NDP, about the brevity of the bill, about the fact that this bill just incorporates, really, a small piece of the larger puzzle. They say it over and over again, yet, according to the notes that I've been given when we began debate this morning, we have spent 14 hours and 50 minutes, nearly 15 hours, on a bill which all parties are indicating is a small piece of the puzzle. Instead, what we've been subjected to for most of that 15

hours has been constant bell-ringing and procedural tactics.

As I've said a number of times this morning, the simple fact is that members of this Legislature may oppose a piece of legislation. They have every opportunity to speak about that during debate. They have an opportunity at committee to put forward amendments, to hear from deputations if the committee decides on that. But instead, Mr. Speaker, we've been subject to this procedural wrangling. You're not seeing it—for those of you watching it at home—this morning because in fact there is a standing committee of this Legislature which is looking into the very serious Ornge situation.

So when the opposition stands up and says, "This is a minor bill," well, then I'll say, "Fine, then let's pass it; let's send it to second reading." When they say, "We want to engage in this procedural wrangling because of the need to investigate Ornge," I point out, as we speak this morning, a standing committee of the Legislature is looking into the Ornge situation, something that was agreed upon by all sides of this House.

After over 15 hours, it's time to get this bill—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. The member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: I think this bill does nothing, as many people have already talked about. It's a 1% solution; it solves nothing. If we ever actually got to a point where some landlord was legislated to have a 1% rent increase, that means, compared to where we are today, where we have approximately 2% in consumer price index growth—and we're in terrible shape. We have high unemployment, huge debt, huge deficit, the worst we've ever had. If we ever actually get to 1%, that's designed failure. Can you imagine how it would be in this country? There would be higher unemployment, less reason to invest in new housing, and there would be greater need for new housing. When we have people that take money out of rent and put it towards building new houses, that's a good thing. That would be an incentive for investors to build more, which would reduce the number of people standing on the street looking for a house.

The 2.5% would be even worse, because that would indicate that when the consumer price index goes above 2.5%, when our economy starts to thrive and there are jobs and things do go up and there are profits, debts start to disappear, deficits disappear—we're going to limit that to 2.5% for a rent increase? No investor in his right mind is ever going to build a rental house again in that scenario. They would take their money and invest somewhere they could make a much higher rate of return.

I think we're up to almost 16 hours now, and I'm glad to do that because we have a government here who's not giving us an Ornge committee, and that's what we need to do. We need to fix that problem and get democracy working, and we need to have our Board of Internal Economy revisited and reworked. These things need to be done, and then we will co-operate with you. That's up to you, sir, to fix the problem.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It being 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to welcome today Tony Doyle, joining us in the members' east gallery, from my riding of Durham. He and his wife, Sandra, must be very proud: Their son Brady, who is a page here, is captain today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'm pleased to welcome here today members of the Ontario Environment Industry Association, who are holding their annual Queen's Park day here at the Legislature. ONEIA will be holding a reception in the legislative dining room from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. this evening. I encourage all of my fellow members to attend. We welcome them to Queen's Park, and I know they'd be interested in knowing that the St. Catharines Junior B Falcons defeated Brantford to win the Sutherland Cup.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I believe that was out of order.

The member for Northumberland—Quinte West.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: It gives me great pleasure to introduce, from the Northumberland Community Counselling Centre, Patricia Hollingsworth, the executive director, and Janet Irvine, the board chair.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I'd like to introduce Shelley Watt Proulx, the executive director of the Counselling Centre of East Algoma, who is here today for Family Services Day.

Mr. Bob Delaney: It's my pleasure to introduce two outstanding optometrists from western Mississauga. Please join me in welcoming Dr. Sabrina Ahmed and Dr. Suleman Remtulla, who are visiting us here in the Legislature for the first time.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's my great pleasure to welcome today to Queen's Park Mr. Don Pitt, the executive director of the Family Counselling Centre, from Sarnia, here to take part in Family Services Day.

Hon. John Milloy: I would like to welcome Leslie Josling and Paul Rossi from KW Counselling, along with Sue Gillespie from Mosaic Counselling. They are joining us from the beautiful riding of Kitchener Centre for Family Services Day here at Queen's Park.

Mrs. Teresa Piruzza: Good morning. I stand today to welcome a friend and constituent of mine—I'm looking up at the gallery—Joyce Zuk, who is the executive director of Family Service Windsor-Essex, who's here for Family Services Day. Thank you for the work that you and your staff do each day, and welcome.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Family Service Ontario is here today. Welcome to you all, specifically Alex MacDougall, the board chair; John Ellis, the executive director; Sandra Savage, the executive director from the

London Family Service Thames Valley; and Bev Noble, the board chair of Family Service Thames Valley.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Our community has a friend in the House today: Allan McQuarrie, the executive director of the Community Counselling Centre of Nipissing. Welcome, Allan.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm pleased to welcome to the Legislature today, for Family Services Day, from Thunder Bay and the Catholic Family Development Centre there, Carol Cline, as well as to acknowledge the Thunder Bay Counselling Centre and their executive director, Nancy Chamberlain.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: I'd like to welcome Alex MacDougall, past president, and Ray Houde, the executive director, for our Family Services Day. Welcome to the Legislature.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I'd like to welcome guests from Peel-Dufferin Catholic Family Services, including Mark Creedon, Ehsan Khandaker, Valerie Anderson, Angelica Lopez, Carol-Ann Drinkwater, Theresa Koutzodimos and Stacey-Ann Brown.

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you for allowing me to welcome Syed Warsi, from the wonderful riding of Markham-Unionville. He's visiting his daughter and page, Safa Warsi. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd like to welcome friends of mine, Nancy and Steve Rastin. Steve's here today with the Ontario Trial Lawyers' Association. He runs a thriving practice, Rastin & Associates, in Barrie and Midland and—okay.

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: It's my pleasure to introduce Asquith Allen. He lives in the riding of York South-Weston, and he is with York University and the Ontario Young Liberals association. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Reza Moridi: It's my pleasure to welcome Elisha Laker, Mariana Benitez and Susan Warren, from Family Services York Region, to the House today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): In the Speaker's gallery today, from the riding of Oxford, we have at Queen's Park today students, parents and staff from the Oxford Reformed Christian School as guests of the Speaker. The member from Oxford and I will meet on the grand staircase for a photo. Welcome to Queen's Park on your adventure in Toronto.

And other guests of mine, from the great riding of Brant—even though we didn't beat St. Catharines—we have joining us today at Queen's Park the principal of St. Leo School, Dr. Dale Petruka, and her students Hannah Puckering and Sofia DiFelice. Welcome.

On a point of order, the member from Oxford.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you very much for introducing the class from the Oxford Reformed Christian School, and I do think that they are as important that they should be introduced by the Speaker, but I do want to add my personal welcome to them.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's not a point of order, but I would expect that you would stand and say so.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Minister, yesterday you said, "We ... must achieve 0%.... We have built those numbers into the budget." You also pointed out that it's important to freeze wages.

Mr. Speaker, the minister clearly agrees we need to freeze wages, the Premier agrees we need to freeze wages; the charter allows you to do it. In fairness to Ontarians, why won't the minister join this party and commit to an across-the-board legislated public sector wage freeze?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The charter allows it under certain conditions and meeting those conditions, which include full discussion and negotiation. I would refer the member opposite to the British Columbia Supreme Court ruling. We have a number of legal opinions that share the same point of view with respect to how we proceed.

It's not a question, as I say—your leader pointed out yesterday page 171 of the budget: \$6 billion over the next three years. We have laid out mandates with four of the agreements that are up this year, all of which contemplate, frankly, more than net zeros, but real zeros, and we want to move forward with our partners in the public and broader public sectors and avoid the constitutional traps that are there, as well as avoiding the kind of name-calling and bringing down working people the way your government did 10 years ago.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Well, both the Premier and this minister have indicated that there are constitutional impediments to a legislated wage freeze in one breath, but in the next breath they're saying they're prepared to take those steps if necessary. They can't have it both ways. Either it's one way or it isn't, and I'm sure that the minister's legal advisers have advised him that it is possible to take the step and to legislate a public sector wage freeze when there are pressing fiscal circumstances.

Clearly, we're facing a \$30-billion deficit. If there are pressing legal circumstances other than that, I can't imagine what they are. Minister, why won't you take these steps and take action right away?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The risk associated with moving in the way the opposition wants to move is quite high from a court challenge perspective. We have to rely on the best advice available to us.

The most recent example where that risk is high is British Columbia. I remind the member opposite that the federal government in fact didn't legislate a wage freeze; they legislated a 1.5% increase, but they did that after thorough discussions, and they are still before the courts. There are a number of challenges going on.

The worst thing we could do is proceed in haste and not get it right, because if we don't get it right, we will not be able to achieve the goal. There are elements of risk in this, and we have sought both internal and external

advice. We look forward to working with the official opposition as we move to achieve the wage freeze undertakings in the budget.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Well, the British Columbia case to which the minister is referring has largely been overridden by other cases, as he would know. I would refer him to the Fraser case, which indicates that where there are pressing fiscal circumstances, there are situations where governments can take action.

We're looking at a \$30-billion deficit. We've had three downgrades. We've actually had our bonds downgraded by one international credit rating agency. This is a time to take leadership on this file and to take action. It's urgent. Why won't the minister take action and legislate a public sector wage freeze now?

1040

Hon. Dwight Duncan: First of all, just to correct the record, Ontario is not faced with a \$30-billion deficit. At a minimum, I would suggest that the member opposite speak to facts. Mr. Speaker—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, don't add after I get quiet.

Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The public accounts next year will show that, and we can compare what is said in here versus what reality is at that time.

So no, they're wrong. I'm not going to risk this situation based on very poor advice from the opposition. We will proceed, trying to work with our partners to achieve balance so we can continue to make the investments in education and health care that we think are very important.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question this time is to the Attorney General, and it concerns again the Mount Pleasant Group of Cemeteries.

Minister, in addition to the financial concerns that have been expressed with respect to this group, a legal opinion from McCarthy Tétrault regarding the group's board states that the appointment of all board members appears to be invalid. The opinion goes on to state, "This is presumably a matter of considerable interest and concern to the government, to the relevant regulatory bodies" and to the group itself. "In such circumstances, immediate administrative investigation and intervention appears to be warranted."

Minister, this is a very serious concern expressed by a well-respected law firm in 2009. Why hasn't this compelled you to investigate this group's rogue activities?

Hon. John Gerretsen: We respect the opinion of the various law firms that may be involved in this, but we respect an opinion of a court even more. If there are issues

that are to be worked out between the Mount Pleasant Group and all those people who don't agree with what they're doing right now, there is one avenue to deal with that, and that is to bring a court application so that the issues can be dealt with by a judge, as is always done in our system in any dispute that is a private dispute between individuals and an entity like this. That's where it should be dealt with.

There are many opinions out there. I respect this opinion, but there are other opinions as well that are contrary to that opinion.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: With respect, it's ridiculous to expect that parties should have to go to a court when the jurisdiction to act lies with the Attorney General's office to begin with. The minister will know very clearly that the Charities Accounting Act gives you the ability to investigate, through the Office of the Public Guardian and Trustee, the activities of any charity.

Numerous red flags have been raised with respect to the activities of this group. You can no longer abdicate your responsibilities. Instead of telling us it's not your jurisdiction, that people should go to the courts, will you undertake your responsibility, request the financial records of the Mount Pleasant Group of Cemeteries, and make those records available to the public, as they should be?

Hon. John Gerretsen: First of all, it's my understanding that the Mount Pleasant Group has just issued a statement in that regard which I've only just received. I'll have to take a look at that to see how it affects this particular situation.

But what's interesting is that there are no public funds. There are no government funds involved in this whatsoever. This was done under a statute—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew, come to order.

Hon. John Gerretsen: The corporation was set up under a statute that well precedes the existence of the province of Ontario.

Unless there are some allegations with respect to some criminal activity that would be—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew, come to order—second time, same question.

Hon. John Gerretsen: —that would appropriately be dealt with by a police investigation, there is not very much that the government of Ontario is going to get involved in this case, without it being taken to the proper authorities, which is to take the matter to court.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Again, with respect, the fact that this group has never received any public funding is completely irrelevant. It's like any other charity. The Office of the Public Guardian and Trustee can investigate any charity, and you well know that, Mr. Attorney General.

This is not a private dispute; this is something that involves the public. This is money that was established as a public trust for the benefit of the people of York, now the city of Toronto. They have assets of over \$1 billion under their administration. It's alleged they've made hundreds of millions of dollars, and no one knows where it's going. I cannot for the life of me understand why you do not accept that it is your responsibility to investigate this. Mr. Speaker, why won't the Attorney General do his job and look into this matter?

Hon. John Gerretsen: First of all, the Mount Pleasant Group complies with all the requirements under the Cemeteries Act. That's number one. As far as I know, there have been no allegations of any kind of criminal activities. If there were, then the proper investigations would be taking place by the police.

The amount of money that was actually invested in 1827, the way I understand it, was \$300. A dollar was put into a kitty by 300 different individuals. It's a corporation that looks after cemeteries, not only at Mount Pleasant but in other areas as well.

There are other ways in which the private dispute between this organization and the group of individuals that don't like what's going on can be dealt with, and that proper place is the court system. The member, who's a highly respected member of the legal profession, well knows that.

MINING INDUSTRY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. Today's announcement about Cliffs Resources proves what New Democrats have been saying for quite a while: Ontario has the skilled workforce and the ability to process natural resources and create prosperity and good jobs right here in Ontario. But there are still questions we need answered, Speaker. Can the Acting Premier tell us whether all processing will be done here in Ontario, or will Cliffs still be shipping away partially processed resources to create jobs somewhere else?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Today, Cliffs Natural Resources announced a \$3.3-billion investment in northern Ontario. You said it wouldn't happen. They announced that they're going to build a chromite mine. They're going to build a new transportation corridor and, yes, a \$1.8-billion processing facility in Capreol, near Sudbury. You said that wouldn't happen. This government is delivering for northern Ontario over your objections, over your inappropriateness. But most importantly, 1,200 aboriginal Ontarians will work in this facility as part of the deal.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Be seated, please.

Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Earlier today, the Minister of Northern Development said the government hasn't quite worked out the details about the processing of the materials. Over here we think that's a pretty important detail to

be worked out, and thousands of good jobs rely on that detail. If the government doesn't know today, when exactly will they know?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The leader of the third party will be aware that because of the large nature of this, because of what the economists and accountants call the material nature of this, Cliffs had to disclose their \$3.3-billion investment in northern Ontario. With processing of the natural resources happening in Ontario, with 1,200 First Nations Ontarians working at the site, Mr. Speaker, this is a big announcement for northern Ontario.

We will finalize those negotiations. Full transparency and accountability said we had to put this out, and Cliffs did. This is good news. You ought to be celebrating instead of nitpicking about something that is probably the most important announcement in northern—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, New Democrats have been very, very clear. If we're going to build a prosperous and sustainable future, we need to be smart and focus on creating those good jobs.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member for Peterborough, come to order.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Ontario's natural resources should be used to create those good jobs and prosperity here in Ontario, not somewhere else—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan, come to order.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: —and the government support should be tied to that job guarantee. Do the McGuinty Liberals share that commitment, yes or no?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan, second time.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, let me remind the member opposite about the mining sector in Ontario: \$3.5 billion in capital investment in 2011, the highest in Canada; over \$1 billion in mining exploration—for the first time ever, last year we hit \$1 billion; 27,000 direct jobs in metal mining; 50,000 related processing jobs; one quarter of all Canadian mining jobs.

1050

This is a great day for northern Ontario. You ought to be celebrating a good deal for northerners, for aboriginals, for all Ontarians. It's about a brighter future. It's about confidence in our economy and the confidence that the private sector has as well in the future of Canada's greatest province.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. New question.

MINING INDUSTRY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is back to the Acting Premier. I think he needs to actually be clear

about the fact that there's not quite a deal yet. We just want to make sure it's the best deal that we can get for northern Ontario.

The support of First Nations is going to be absolutely vital if the Ring of Fire development is going to proceed, yet we learned today that yesterday, some First Nations were caught completely off guard by this announcement. Why didn't the government engage in proper consultations with First Nations, Speaker?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, 1,200 jobs for First Nations—First Nations have been involved in those discussions. I don't know where she gets her information. Let me say this, Mr. Speaker: She ought to be celebrating this. It is good news for the north. It's good news for aboriginal Ontarians. It's good news for all Ontarians.

We're getting the processing in Capreol: 450 construction jobs, 400 permanent jobs. We're processing one quarter of all the minerals found in Canada, right here in Ontario. Our mining sector is leading the way as we move back to balance in this province, as we move back to a stronger and better future for all Ontarians, most importantly aboriginal Ontarians, who have an important role to play not only here but in Mattagami, in all the great developments in the north. We pledge to continue to work with them for a better future for their children as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Earlier today the Minister of Northern Development said that First Nations must be "front and centre." Does the Acting Premier think that refusing to talk to First Nations until the day before an announcement is the definition of "front and centre"?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, that is just simply not correct. There have been numerous discussions. This is a large opportunity for all Ontarians. We're particularly proud that our aboriginal communities in the north have the opportunity to share in this enormous development, share in its prosperity. We're proud of our government's record in sharing resource revenues. I think of Mattagami, Mr. Speaker. We're proud of our record in sharing of gaming revenues. I think of the new accord we came to terms with. There are always issues to be dealt with.

Instead of celebrating this, the third party wants to denigrate the deal, undermine it. Mr. Speaker, northerners are celebrating today. They see this as a great opportunity, and they know it was this government that delivered on the commitment to jobs and investment for northern Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: If we want to bring prosperity to the north, it needs to be there for everyone. If proper consultation does not happen, the jobs promised today could be lost to drawn-out disputes, and those people on that side should know that very well. They've had to deal with a lot of those drawn-out disputes. People who need the opportunity most in these situations could be the exact ones who end up falling behind.

Will the Acting Premier admit that they should have engaged First Nations from the very start? And are they ready now to roll up their sleeves and engage in meaningful consultation with First Nations to ensure their full participation?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: What I can say to our aboriginal brothers and sisters is this government is prepared to work with them day and night, as we have. This announcement today is great news for aboriginal Ontarians, it's great news for northerners and it's great news for all Ontarians. It's about a brighter future for their children and our children. We need no lesson from that party on dealing with our First Nations, Mr. Speaker. We are proud of the relationships we have.

We have more to do, and we'll continue to build on the success we've achieved, because there are still too many First Nations communities that don't have adequate services, still too many First Nation children who aren't getting an equal education. We pledge to continue to build on the successes we've announced today, to build a better—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: You've been in government for almost a decade and you've done nothing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean—Carleton will come to order.
New question.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Minister of Health. For months, we've been warning the minister about the staffing policies at Ornge that leave bases understaffed and incapable of responding to emergency calls.

It's now been four months since the minister's leadership team has been in place, and ensuring proper staffing policies surely should have been a priority. I ask the minister to listen to this transcript of a call that was monitored on the emergency frequency this morning:

"One person trapped. Extrication under way. EMS on scene, asking for air ambulance. Dispatch telling them they are unavailable until after 7:15 due to down-staffing."

The person in question had to be transferred by land ambulance. He died.

I ask the minister, if ensuring proper staffing levels was not a priority for her leadership team, what was?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The first thing, I need to acknowledge that this is a tragic vehicle accident, and my heart goes out to the loved ones of the family. I do want to take this opportunity to say thank you to the first responders, the firefighters, the police, the paramedics for all the work they do on the front lines in this case and in others.

I know that Ornge is called when there is a very serious accident, when a patient is in critical condition, and I know, Speaker, that along with all the other first responders, they work very, very hard to save lives every day.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, we want to express our condolences to the family as well. But this is a matter of responsibility that goes directly to the Minister of Health. She had a responsibility to ensure that her new leadership team was prioritizing patient care. She knew full well that there were far too many incidents, already 13 investigations of incidents where calls could not be properly responded to.

I ask the minister this: Why has she not been monitoring the performance of her new leadership team to ensure that staffing levels, above all else, were there to ensure that any emergency call could be properly responded to?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I can assure the member opposite and the people of Ontario that staffing is a very, very high priority for the new leadership at Ornge. They are working very hard to get the right staffing in place so that they can provide the best possible care for the people of this province.

I can assure the member opposite also that the new performance agreement that we have put in place compels Ornge to provide us with information on the requests they have received, the percentages that they have serviced, and the reasons why the balance of the calls were not in fact responded to.

This is the highest priority for the people at Ornge. It is a tragedy. I urge the member opposite not to politicize this tragedy.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Michael Mantha: The question is to the Acting Premier. Mr. Bartolucci made an announcement this morning that Cliffs Resources is planning a smelter in Sudbury. This morning, the minister has refused to indicate how much of the ore extracted in Ontario will be processed in Ontario, and he also mentioned an exemption. Why won't the government say whether Cliffs has been granted an exemption to ship resources out of Ontario for processing?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: A quarter of all metal resources in Canada are processed in Ontario. This is good news for Ontario; it is good news. We are locating a processing facility in Capreol. I wish the NDP would celebrate that. So we have a processing plant that will create 450 jobs in construction, 450 permanent jobs, and we are proud to celebrate this announcement today.

We look forward to Cliffs. Because of the material nature of this, they had to go public, as we did, to disclose just how important this is for Cliffs, to Ontario, to the First Nations of Ontario, to all Ontarians.

You know what? This is good news. We're processing in Ontario, something we've delivered and you haven't.

1100

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Mantha: Let me be clear about where our position is. We support good jobs in Ontario, but we

want to make sure that we're getting good jobs in here furthestmost for all Ontarians.

Although Cliffs announced a smelter in Sudbury, the company is still in talks about getting exemptions to shift the semi-processed ore overseas for processing. Our communities need resources mined in Ontario to stay in Ontario for processing, to create stable jobs and take full advantage of the opportunities that the Ring of Fire presents. Why won't this government say whether it plans on granting an exemption to the company to allow it to ship raw exports outside of Ontario?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Let me remind the member opposite just what the NDP campaigned on, Mr. Speaker. In their last platform, the NDP said they would put a moratorium on development north of 51. That would have stopped the Ring of Fire. That was in your platform.

With respect to First Nations, let me read a quote from this morning: "Webequie First Nation acknowledges Ontario's commitment to support the directly impacted First Nations and to engage the federal government in the tri-lateral process. It is important for all levels of government, including local impacted First Nations governments, to work ... towards a co-operative framework." That's what they say, Mr. Speaker.

We're working towards a co-operative framework. We're working for more jobs for aboriginal Ontarians and all Ontarians. This is great news for Ontario. This is great news delivered by a government that puts northern Ontario at the front of the train, not at the back, the way the third party would.

FAMILY SERVICE ONTARIO

Ms. Helena Jaczek: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Today in the Legislature, we're joined by members of Family Service Ontario. This organization represents 44 not-for-profit member agencies that provide community-based mental health services and programs to over 250,000 individuals and families annually. They have agencies throughout Ontario. I've had the pleasure of meeting with Elisha Laker, executive director of Family Services York Region, and was most interested to learn about the various mental health support programs, which provide assistance with emotional, psychological, social, physical and financial struggles.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, to the minister: Please tell the members of this House how our government is working to support the important work being undertaken each and every day across our province by Family Service Ontario.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: It is great to have so many people from Family Service Ontario here today. I want to say thank you for what you do in your communities. Thank you for your dedication and the difference you make to the people in your communities. You make a real difference, particularly for those suffering with mental health and addictions issues.

Family Service Ontario offers a wide range of mental health services across the province, including substance

abuse programs, domestic abuse supports and family counselling, just to name a few. I can tell you that these initiatives are absolutely in line with our 10-year mental health and addictions strategy. Our recent budget reflected our commitment. We are committed to a 4% annual increase to the community sector, and that includes community mental health. We're able to do that because we have taken a real wage freeze with the doctors of this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Thank you for the good news on funding, Minister. As the minister noted, Family Service Ontario provides valuable services to families across Ontario, and I know my constituents in Oak Ridges–Markham benefit greatly from their efforts.

In addition to their provision of valuable mental health services, I know that FSO agencies also offer other services, such as relationship and financial counselling, programs to address substance abuse, as well as services for victims of domestic violence and those with developmental disabilities.

Minister, could you please tell the Legislature what our government does to support Family Service Ontario's work with those who are victims of domestic violence?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. John Milloy: I'm pleased to answer from the perspective of my ministry and echo the welcoming of the members of Family Service Ontario who are with us today. As I mentioned in introductions, we have two outstanding agencies here from my riding.

I'm proud to say that in terms of the violence-against-women issue and the funding that we provide to combat that, we provide funding to 30 agencies that are members of Family Service Ontario. This includes funding for counselling programs, the Transitional and Housing Support Program, as well as the early intervention program for children who witness violence.

I'm happy to know that my ministry's annualized funding to Family Service Ontario has more than tripled since we first came to office in 2003. In fact, in 2009-10, MCSS increased annualized funding for VAW counselling agencies across the province by some 3.29%. I look forward to our continuing work with Family Service Ontario.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Rick Nicholls: My question is for the Minister of Health. Speaker, the minister has repeatedly invoked the Auditor General in defending her failures, but she knows that the auditor's mandate is to investigate value for money, nothing else. He did this admirably, delivering a scathing indictment of her failed management.

But, Speaker, the Auditor General is an auditor. He's a numbers guy, and his report is being considered by the public accounts committee, a numbers committee. What he and the committee do not do is investigate adverse

patient outcomes that have surely resulted from the minister's complete abdication of her responsibilities.

So I ask the minister: When will she show concern for the thousands of patients and families who have come into contact with Ornge?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. John Milloy: I'm actually quite disturbed by the question that was raised that called into question the good work of the Auditor General of Ontario, an officer of this Legislature. The Auditor General had a chance to examine the Ornge situation with great detail, and he came forward with a report, which right now is being looked at by the public accounts committee. I would remind members that that committee has sat for over 20 hours, close to 21 hours, and has heard from 29 witnesses.

At the same time, Mr. Speaker, they've had a chance, as I mentioned, to look into the Auditor General's report. The Auditor General's report highlighted the fact that there were weaknesses in the performance agreement and the relationship between the government and Ornge, and the minister has rectified that through a number of steps, including a very important piece of legislation in front of this Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Again to the minister—I'm not sure where to look now. However, Speaker, the government's true colours are showing. To them, this is merely an exercise in issues management. They're clearly indifferent to the countless patients and paramedics who have contacted the PC caucus seeking answers.

The Minister of Health has argued in this House on no less than 61 occasions that she takes the word of the Auditor General. Now, if that's true, she'll be aware that the auditor has, in fact, identified 21 incidents of adverse patient outcomes—21 incidents. And now, today, a death due to a lack of staffing; an unfortunate situation that could have been avoided.

So I ask the minister, given that she's invoked the auditor's name over 61 times in defending her failures, will she finally show his report the respect it deserves by supporting the expansion of the public accounts committee's terms of reference?

Hon. John Milloy: Will the honourable member show respect for the good work of the Auditor General and the fact that the public accounts committee is undertaking very, very important work?

Mr. Speaker, we have heard from the opposition party about knowledge that was had on this side of the House, but I think what we found in the public accounts committee is the deep ties between the Progressive Conservative Party and the Ornge situation. We've heard from Kelly Mitchell, who was paid \$400,000 in order to lobby opposition MPPs—Progressive Conservative MPPs—a well-known Conservative activist. We heard about the work of Guy Giorno and other prominent Conservative lawyers and the advice they gave Chris Mazza about how to hide his salary.

I think the public accounts committee is seized with this issue. They're coming forward with some very inter-

esting facts about that party and Ornge, and I think we should allow the committee to do its work.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Minister, you used declining revenue at border casinos as justification for eliminating the slots-at-racetracks program in order to protect jobs at the casino in Windsor. Yet, yesterday, Caesars Windsor sent layoff notices to 27 workers there.

Would the minister care to revise his rationale for his decision to put hundreds of Windsor racetrack employees out of work?

1110

Hon. Dwight Duncan: No. We're not going to subsidize the horse racing industry any more.

I'll remind the member opposite that 10 years ago there were 5,000 employees at Caesars Windsor. Today, there are under 2,000. Casinos are coming on stream in Cleveland, in Toledo, in Columbus. We simply had a saturated market. We had the choice: Keep two facilities competing against one another, give \$350 million to an industry, or work to protect the market. Mr. Speaker, that is our commitment.

The member opposite forgets how many have been laid off at Caesars due to increasing competition, including the fact that we had two casinos working within seven kilometres of one another, in fact spending money to compete against one another. That's not the way to go. I reject his thoughts on that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Hundreds of people are losing their jobs in the Windsor-Essex community after this government closed down the slots and ended the agreement with the horse racing industry without any consultation. And this week we learned that Caesars Windsor has been sending out promotional materials, one of which I've provided to the minister, enticing Ontario residents to spend their gaming dollars at the Horseshoe Casino in Cleveland, Ohio. The fact that Caesars Windsor, which is owned by this government, is mailing a flyer to its patrons, encouraging them to take their entertainment dollars to the US, is salt in the wounds to the workers of our community.

Mr. Minister, why is this happening? Please, answer the people of Windsor. Why is it happening?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I'd just remind the member opposite that in the last week of racing at Windsor Raceway, more than half of the horses were American; 106 horses were scheduled to race and 54 were owned by Americans. That money went to the United States.

The member opposite may want to diminish and try to undermine the viability of Caesars Windsor—which the third party, in fact, created in Windsor way back in the early 1990s—but he's playing games with hundreds of jobs. I would urge him not to easily succumb to the notion that we could support two casinos working within seven kilometres of one another, with a market that's

saturated with slot machines and other gambling opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, we have moved to protect our investment in that facility: a billion dollars just four years ago, with new convention facilities—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

EDUCATION REFORM

Ms. Soo Wong: Mr. Speaker, my question, through you, is to the Minister of Education.

The government has made some tough choices, given the current economic climate. But as the economy continues to recover, serious steps have been taken to ensure the budget is brought back to balance by 2017. That's why we have worked with the NDP on a budget that puts education on a sustainable path forward.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, can she tell this House how she will protect the important gains we have made in our education system, given these tough economic times?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Thank you to the member for Scarborough—Agincourt for her constant commitment to public education.

The commitment of our government is also constant to public education. We're committed to a strong, publicly funded education system, and that commitment will never waver. That's why we have worked very hard to restore public confidence in our schools after years of neglect under the previous PC government.

Our work in education is now recognized, and we are being recognized around the world as being a leader in educational excellence. Our grade 8 students are leading the country in math, reading and science, and the Ontario students are the only ones who scored above the national average in reading.

That's why, despite a challenging economic time, we're very committed to protecting the gains that we've made in education, protecting the classroom experience, protecting small class sizes, keeping teachers in our classrooms. Education is the best investment in our future and that's why our commitment to it is constant.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you, Minister, for that response. My constituents in Scarborough—Agincourt consistently tell us that good schools in their neighbourhoods are among the most important things to them. I'm proud to be a part of this government, which the OECD has called a successful education reformer. But I have heard some concerns about the effectiveness of smaller class sizes in boosting student success.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister tell this House how individual attention in classrooms helps Ontario students?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Thank you to the member. We've been committed, as I said, to protecting the gains Ontario has made in education: full-day kindergarten, smaller class sizes and more teachers in our classrooms.

That's because we know that those investments set our students up for success.

Let me be clear: What we're giving our students in Ontario is an opportunity to compete in a high-skills world, in a new economy. Young students in small class sizes get the individual attention that they need to master the basics. Literacy and numeracy in grades 1 to 3 are so critical. I know that as Minister of Education; I also know it as a mum of two boys who are in grade 1. Some 90% of primary classes now have 20 or fewer students, and that compares to 2003, where one quarter of all primary classes had 25 or more students.

It's important that our students get the time and attention of their teacher in a small class size so that they can succeed, and that's what our focus is on.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Todd Smith: To the Minister of Finance: In April, last month, Ontario's small business confidence experienced its sharpest decline since August of last year. After good numbers in March, small business lost confidence in April when faced with the realities of a lacklustre Ontario budget. The analysis is simple: The numbers for March are because Drummond acted; the numbers for April are because Duncan dithered.

Ontario's small businesses have joined Moody's and S&P in what's becoming a chorus of rejection surrounding the budget. Minister, when will you actually show some leadership and come up with a real plan for Ontario's economy?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: March: 46,000 net new full-time jobs in Ontario; the unemployment rate's at 7.4%, the lowest level in three years; more than 555,000 new jobs since 2003, in spite of the largest contraction since the great downturn. Ontario runs one of the lowest-cost governments in Canada, according to every source, relative to GDP, according to Don Drummond. We're number one in Canada in mineral production, valued at \$11 billion, and today we announced a new project that will employ 1,100 people directly in northern Ontario.

This government has taken strong action to build a better future for Ontario. Part of that strong action is a strong education and health system. Those are our priorities. We reject the ideas that they put forward and want to build that better future for our children.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Todd Smith: Minister, your bluster is embarrassing, and it's insulting to the hundreds and thousands of people who are out of work in the province of Ontario. Just last week, there were hundreds of jobs that were eliminated in Peterborough, Mississauga and North York at Norampac plants. There's hundreds more that could be gone in Trenton if you don't act soon.

According to the CFIB, 73% of small business owners list energy as a major cost concern, and your government has increased their hydro bills again this month. Some 57% say that taxes are a major cost concern, so you brought in a budget that drove up their taxes even higher.

CFIB stats show that this will cost businesses \$350 million this year and over half a million dollars next year. Ontario's small businesses are now working half the year just to pay the government.

Minister, when will you stop standing in the way of small businesses in Ontario?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We cut the small business tax rate by almost 18%, and that party voted against it. When we brought in red tape reduction legislation, that party voted against it. When we brought in the most progressive reforms to our sales tax system, which were endorsed by small business, that party rejected them.

We need no lesson from them on building a strong economy, with good schools and good health care. That's what this party is about. That's what this government is about. We're going to continue to fight for small business the way we have up until now, working with the CFIB and others to continue to build that economy of the future, with the right investments for a strong and bright future for all of our children.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. Minister, as you already know, today there was a fatal accident in York region and Ornge, the agency that provides air ambulance, was called to the scene. Their response? "We have no resources. We cannot send an ambulance to the crash scene."

Minister, we're talking about the Ornge core mandate. This is what they're there to do; this is why they exist. With all the spotlight being on Ornge right now, how can things go so wrong? What's going on at Ornge?

1120

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I said in the earlier question, my thoughts are with the family affected by this terrible tragedy.

I can assure the members of this House and the people of Ontario that the new leadership at Ornge has, as their number one priority, patient safety. That is the very first and highest priority for the new management team, and I know that Dr. Barry McLellan, the CEO of Sunnybrook Hospital, a former coroner of the province of Ontario, is on the board at Ornge. He is heading up the patient safety responsibilities of that organization, so I would urge the member opposite not to politicize and not to prejudice this incident.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Speaker, the minister talks a lot about new management, new structure, new performance agreement, but there is nothing in the new performance agreement that talks about quality of care. It talks about a performance indicator that should be in an annual operational plan; that still does not exist and probably won't exist for months to come. This is very troubling.

I want to assure the people of Ontario that we have a strong and robust air ambulance, but I'm starting to doubt this very much. I think the way to restore confidence

would be to reflect the will of the House and put forward a select committee, so that we can look into this issue and restore confidence, because right now, my confidence is shaken to the core. I'm worried, Mr. Speaker. What does the minister have to say?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I do think it's unfortunate that members of this Legislature are using this tragedy in a political way. I can assure you that I will be speaking to Dr. McLellan later today. I will get the facts of the case. I know that they will be very concerned about this situation.

I can also actually correct the member opposite. The new performance agreement does include quality improvement plans, like we have at our hospitals, so Ornge will be measuring and will be publicly reporting on quality improvement. Compensation to senior executives will be tied to quality improvement, just like they are in our hospitals.

I urge the members of this Legislature to support our legislation, Bill 50, to entrench oversight and responsibility at Ornge.

NORTHERN POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Bill Mauro: My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. We need to ensure that northern Ontario residents have improved access to more post-secondary education and training opportunities. All Ontarians have the right to benefit from a post-secondary education, regardless of their geographical locations.

The minister, in his previous portfolio, visited Thunder Bay Regional Research Institute to launch an innovative technology company called XLV Diagnostics. The minister is well aware of the talent that exists in Thunder Bay, but we need to continue to foster this talent through our post-secondary institutions. This announcement showed the fruits of our government's commitment to education, innovation and creating prosperity for northern Ontarians.

Mr. John Yakabuski: That's not a question.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Speaker, through you to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities: How is the minister helping our northern and rural post-secondary institutions?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I want to thank the member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan, and contrast it to the member from Pembroke etc., who said, "That's not a question."

Mr. Speaker, what was very funny to me is we haven't had a question on northern education in years, opposite, while the members on this side of the House have fought for the following things: an additional 5,266 places in our northern colleges and universities, bringing them to over 31,000; a 65% increase in funding to northern colleges, from the member from Sault Ste. Marie, who led the creation of Algoma College to the establishment of an architecture school in Sudbury, a medical school and a law school in Thunder Bay. As to the Ring of Fire, after

this great announcement today, we now have the educational facilities in northern Ontario to make sure the high-value jobs from the Cliffs investment stay there—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Your mike is off. Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Mauro: Speaker, thank you. Northern Ontarians need to be able to access post-secondary education to ensure that the manufacturing and natural resource processing industries continue to see a long-term future in our province. Northern Ontarians need improved access to more post-secondary education and training opportunities through enhanced distance learning services. There are more than 200,000 northern residents who do not have direct access to post-secondary classrooms in their communities. Many northern Ontarians see the distance to access post-secondary education as a barrier to their future.

Speaker, through you to the minister, how is the minister going to ensure that all northern Ontarians have access to post-secondary education like every other student in our province?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: The member for Nepean—Carleton as well made the comment that nothing has happened in 10 years. On top of all that massive investment, the first law school in 42 years in the north; not only that—Contact North, \$2.5 million in infrastructure. We're upgrading the expansion information technology to provide Contact North with the necessary equipment and bandwidth for its audio conferencing and video conferencing in e-learning—\$5 million for information technology enhancements, and 90 small and remote communities and First Nations now have access to Contact North. Mr. Speaker, this essentially means that there is a college and a classroom in every small community in the north. That has happened over the last eight years. This is the greatest level of access we've had, and we're now seeing the biggest investments in the history of this province in the north. These are good times for northern Ontario.

CURRICULUM

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Education. As a former educator myself, I've long believed that a teacher's role is to teach the curriculum that is outlined by the government of Ontario in a manner that allows students, particularly young students, to develop and foster skill sets such as critical thinking, so that when they leave their formal education and enter the workplace they can be prepared to make sound, individual choices based on those skills. A teacher's role is not to brainwash children to further political causes under the guise of an alternative education model. Minister, what are you doing to ensure that children as young as eight are not exposed to the abusive authority demonstrated by this group of teachers at the Grove alternative—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister of Education?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Ontario Liberals have invested in schools to give our children the education that they need to be tomorrow's leaders. We know that every kid deserves a world-class education, and that's why we have worked so hard over the past nine years to rebuild public confidence in our schools, to bring peace and stability into our classrooms, to get our class sizes down, to get our test scores up and our graduation rates up. We are very proud of what is happening in our schools across the province, and we believe that our students deserve the very best.

I know that in the supplementary I'll have an opportunity to speak more directly to the Grove Community School, but at its heart, it is a school where community and volunteerism is highlighted, and we believe that is a critically important issue.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I'm proud to say that over the 13 years that I was a high school teacher I did not once impress upon my students my political, personal or professional opinions or views. What occurred at the Grove alternative school was an abuse of power by those entrusted in a profession that moulds the minds of our most precious and impressionable resource, Mr. Speaker. As a teacher, I'm appalled that a fellow educator would take advantage of our children. Minister, what are you doing to ensure our children are safe from the abusive learning environment that occurred at the Grove alternative school?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

1130

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: The member opposite would know, as a teacher and someone engaged in the education process, that locally elected school boards are responsible for developing the programs and policies that suit their unique communities. The Ministry of Education works with those school boards to make sure that specialized schools meet our curriculum requirements and our high standards of achievement, so we need to support boards.

If parents, trustees and others have concerns about what is happening at the Grove Community School, it is the elected trustees that are best positioned to examine this issue, and the member, as someone in the teaching profession, would know that.

But I do encourage parents to talk to their school boards and share their concerns. That's the appropriate avenue to do that, Speaker. Local voices in the school boards are critically important because they know their local community, and that is the structure that we have had in place for many years.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is to the Minister of Finance. I've recently been hearing from many of my constituents about the challenges they face now that your government has cancelled your partnership with the horse racing industry. The Sparling family has

three generations who have never worked anywhere but the family horse racing business. If they can't race their horses, they will lose everything.

Can the Minister of Finance provide an update on discussions he is planning to have with the horse racing community to work with families like the Sparlings on a way forward?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, as I've indicated, the government does intend to deal, in part, with some of the challenges faced by people who have been affected by this. Unfortunately, in a world of priorities, subsidizing the owners of horse tracks is not a priority for this government. I know it is for the NDP, and that's fine. This is the party that one day says, "Don't give corporate handouts," and then the next day says, "Give handouts to horse owners in the United States." We don't agree with that. We've indicated that we'll mitigate.

I would remind the NDP that, as part of the budget agreement, you didn't put anything into it about that. You spoke well to your constituents, but when it came time to put something in the deal, you didn't.

We are prepared to mitigate, as we've indicated. We'll be making announcements in due course.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Before we get to the supplementary, I'm going to tell the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek and the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke to come to order.

Supplementary?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: The horse racing industry does not consider this a subsidy; they consider it a partnership. Your decision to leave the partnership with race-tracks across the province has pulled the rug out from under families like the Sparlings. In an effort to cut costs, you may end up putting thousands of Ontarians out of work and make them dependent on income support programs, which will actually cost the province more.

Can the Minister of Finance provide details of the funding for the horse racing sector and their plans to work with families and small business owners?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, we will be making an announcement in due course. But let me remind the member opposite what \$345 million could do in the rural part of Ontario.

It's 18 times what we spend each year on meat inspection. It's 3.5 times what we've spent since 2003 on promoting local food. It's two times more than we have spent since 2003 on rural economic development projects, which have created or retained more than 35,000 jobs. It's two and three quarter times what we've committed to spending on rural broadband programs.

No, Mr. Speaker, we do not see this as a priority. It is a subsidy. It's one that we have ended. We will work with the industry to transition as we build a better future for rural Ontario, including investments in risk management and other areas that benefit all of rural Ontario, not a select few, and certainly not American horse owners.

IMMIGRANTS

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Our newcomer communities make important contributions to the fabric of our society. My community of Scarborough–Rouge River is fortunate to be home to a thriving multi-ethnic, multi-cultural community. Members of our diverse communities also offer their unique skills and knowledge, which play an important role in our economy. Skilled newcomers are in high demand with employers.

Minister, what action is our government taking to ensure that our immigration mix meets the needs of Ontario employers?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I thank the member for Scarborough–Rouge River for the question. Immigrants are key to Ontario's future economic growth and prosperity. Over the next five years, immigrants will account for all of Ontario's net labour growth. And while immigration is a shared responsibility with the federal government, Ottawa continues to make unilateral decisions that affect our immigration mix and our economic recovery.

That's why we're moving forward to create a made-in-Ontario immigration strategy. As a first step, we created the Expert Roundtable on Immigration, chaired by Julia Deans. This group of experts is looking at how immigration can best support Ontario's economic development while improving economic prospects for new immigrants. Their work is already under way and I look forward to hearing their recommendations.

Ontario remains the number one destination for newcomers to Canada. This is one more reason why Ontario needs to have a greater say on immigration.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I know my constituents are pleased that our government is taking action on this important issue. Many of them have raised concerns about the unilateral actions of the federal government.

Service delivery organizations and other stakeholders in my riding are also interested in how they can contribute to our government's strategy. They have on-the-ground knowledge and experience of the challenges facing Ontario newcomers and are excited about this opportunity to make a difference.

How can interested Ontarians contribute to the development of our made-in-Ontario immigration strategy?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I know people are excited about the work the round table is doing and are eager to contribute. Many people want to contribute to that discussion. People can submit their input to Julia Deans, care of Natasha Hall, policy adviser at the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration. Ms. Hall can be reached by email at natasha.hall@ontario.ca.

I'd also like to recognize and thank my parliamentary assistant, the member from Windsor West. She's been a real leader on this issue, Mr. Speaker. She's supporting the efforts of the round table by hosting consultations in communities right across Ontario. Her work will be

invaluable as we develop our immigration strategy, and I thank her for what's she been doing.

Immigration is vital to Ontario's economic success. I thank everyone who's leading and lending their advice and expertise as we work towards making this important goal for the benefit of newcomers and our economy.

VISITORS

Mr. Jeff Leal: I was remiss earlier today in that I didn't introduce Emmet Connolly, who's the president of the board of directors, and Casey Ready, who's the executive director of the Community Counselling and Resource Centre of Peterborough. I invite everybody to their lunch starting at 11:30 in rooms 228 and 230.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Mr. Todd Smith: Point of order, Mr. Speaker: In my supplementary to the Minister of Finance, I said that CFIB stats, when referring to taxes, show that this is going to cost over \$350 million this year and "half a million" next year. I meant to say "half a billion dollars next year," or \$500 million.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1138 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I'd like to welcome Crystal Lavallee. She's a Burlington constituent here today. She took the tour, and she found it very exciting.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. We welcome our guests.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

TOURISM IN STRATFORD

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Today I'm proud to share good news about tourism in Perth–Wellington. Despite the severe economic challenge facing our province, the tourism sector in Stratford is growing. A recent report shows that between 2006 and 2009, the number of visitors to Ontario increased by 6%. However, in that same period, the number visiting Stratford grew an incredible 30%.

I would like to congratulate the city of Stratford and Perth county for their outstanding leadership in promoting tourism. Eugene Zakreski, executive director of the Stratford Tourism Alliance, deserves our thanks for helping to create an even bigger profile for Stratford on the tourism map.

People are taking notice. The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs recognized the Stratford Tourism

Alliance for its initiatives. The Canadian Tourism Commission named Stratford as one of the top five romantic destinations. AOL Canada awarded Stratford with the prestigious title of "top culinary destination in the country" in 2011.

Stratford is also home to the world-renowned Stratford Shakespeare Festival, the Savour Stratford Festival and the Stratford Summer Music festival, to name just a few of our superb cultural attractions.

I want to encourage all members to visit Stratford—and indeed, all of Perth–Wellington.

POLICE OVERSIGHT

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Just two years after we witnessed some of the worst civil rights violations in the history of Ontario in the G20 debacle, recent news has brought to light some very concerning matters surrounding police accountability. We've seen a Toronto Star article which describes over 100 instances where judges have found that police have lied, have misled or have fabricated evidence in court. We've found that mentally ill patients and individuals have been mistreated, have been fatally wounded and killed due to police action. In fact, we've also seen a police quota system being implemented where police officers and enforcement officers are told that they are expected to complete a book of tickets a day.

There are some serious concerns surrounding police accountability, and we as a province and as a country that supports the rule of law in a free and democratic society must ensure that we have proper oversight of police bodies to ensure that we have a safe society, a protected society and that police abuses do not continue in this country and do not continue in this province, particularly where it comes to the reliability of evidence in the court. We need to be able to rely on our officers, and there needs to be severe sanctions for those who are found to lie deliberately in court and mislead court proceedings.

GIVE 2 LIVE CAMPAIGN

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: The Scarborough Hospital Birchmount campus was the only hospital in the GTA that could not provide MRI services. In December 2010, the hospital received operational funding approval to provide MRI services, committing the hospital to raise the funds to acquire the necessary equipment.

I would like to recognize and congratulate the members of the Islamic Foundation of Toronto, located in Scarborough–Rouge River, on their launch of the Give 2 Live campaign, which began on March 23, 2012. The Give 2 Live campaign is a youth-based initiative to raise \$100,000 towards the acquisition of this much-needed MRI equipment at the Scarborough Hospital Birchmount campus.

I take this opportunity to commend the Islamic Foundation of Toronto and the Muslim community for their leadership role in this initiative, which demonstrates their

devoted commitment to their community. Their positive contributions will have an immense impact on the residents of Scarborough. Mr. Speaker, to date, the Islamic Foundation of Toronto has raised \$90,000 and is well on their way to achieving their goal.

I take this opportunity to say thank you and congratulations to everyone in the community for this worthwhile cause.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. Victor Fedeli: The Minister of Northern Development and Mines has made it clear in conversation with the northern mayors and myself that his government is intent and committed to the divestiture of Ontario Northland. That fact is reflected in a motion adopted by North Bay city council. Their request is almost identical to the petition I had on my website, which attracted thousands and is one that I read in this Legislature frequently. It asks Premier McGuinty to meet with the mayors to discuss how the government would satisfactorily address concerns of the northern communities, their businesses and residents. It also points out that there is no apparent government plan or divestment criteria that address the concerns of northern stakeholders with regard to the current initiative and lost future opportunities.

The motion resolves "that the council of the city of North Bay requests that the government of the province of Ontario immediately stop the divestment of the ONTC"; and further resolves that "the city of North Bay request Premier McGuinty and Minister Bartolucci meet with mayors of the northern communities working group, affected aboriginal leaders, business leaders, and affected labour organizations in order to commence negotiations for a 'new deal for the Ontario Northland.'"

KEITH AND CECILE HARRIS

M^{me} France Gélinas: Today, I want to take you back to May 11, 1942. The Second World War was in full swing. A young miner from Sudbury received his draft papers to report to Toronto on the 15th for deployment. That day he went to his sweetheart and proposed marriage. She accepted, and they married on Thursday, May 14, at All People's Church in Sudbury, the night before his departure.

The groom's mother cooked dinner for all the guests. There was a reception in Capreol, where she's from, and a group of musicians from the mine played late into the night.

That young miner was never deployed. The production of nickel for bombs, tanks and ships trumped a new pair of boots on the ground.

Those two people have now been married for 70 years. Their names are Keith and Cecile Harris. She was 19; he was 21. She is 89 and he is 91 years old. They have five children, 15 grandchildren and 20 great-grandchildren.

Today, I rise to recognize the 70th anniversary of Keith and Cecile Harris, my mother-and father-in-law.

After 70 years of marriage, they are still in love, and I have the best in-laws in the world. Congratulations on your 70th wedding anniversary, Mr. and Mrs. Harris. I wish you many, many more. See you at our house: It's going to be a big party on Saturday. I love you both.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I can't resist: I offer my personal congratulations.

They probably have socks that are older than I am.

COUNT ME IN CONFERENCE

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Those of you who know the Mississauga Living Arts Centre know just what a beautiful place that is. It became even more beautiful the other day because it was the site of a very amazing scene. Picture this: 1,300 teenagers in one auditorium.

You're going to think, "If there's 1,300 teenagers, it's got to be a rock concert." But it wasn't. It was something called Count Me In. It was started by somebody called Shane Feldman, and the whole idea behind these 1,300 teenagers coming together was to get them involved in the idea of volunteerism. It was an entire day of workshops and entertainment to get teenagers to come together to make a difference.

What really made an impact on me is that often, when we talk to children, it's all about, "I'm going to do this when I grow up. I'm going to do that when I grow up." But the fact is that you don't have to grow up to do things, and these children showed me that on that wonderful day, where I was joined by the Minister of Education, Laurel Broten, as well. The children are making a change right now—teenagers.

Some of them I'm going to name: The stage manager was Irene Lambropoulos, 17 years old; the assistant stage manager, Carly Feldman, was only 13 years old; and director's assistant Jacklyn Grossman was 19 years old. I just want to commend all of these teenagers for putting this fantastic show on in Mississauga.

1510

RAIL ACCIDENT

Mrs. Jane McKenna: On Monday, April 30, five heroes of February's Via Rail tragedy were honoured at Burlington city hall. These individuals acted with a shared sense of purpose in a time of need.

Wayne Easterbrook, a warrant officer with the Canadian Armed Forces, helped people aboard the lead passenger car prior to and after the arrival of emergency services. He stayed even though his wife was injured and taken from the scene.

Via employees Joette Cantafio and Greg Mohoruk were at home in Burlington when they heard about the derailment. They hurried to the site, took vital identification information from passengers and helped transfer them to buses bound for Toronto.

Ceilidh Gillies was in the last car at the time of the derailment, where she gathered information from the

manifest, confirmed there were three employees in the engine and kept in touch with Via headquarters.

Via service manager Dean Melnyk was on the train and was injured, but stayed aboard until almost all passengers were removed from the lead passenger car, helping to move patients and translating for French-speaking passengers.

I would like to salute the calm and clear-minded action of these individuals, whose efforts strengthened the vital work being done by first responders.

MARGARET HAJDINJAK

Mr. Bill Mauro: This is Mental Health Week. I rise today to pay tribute to a woman of incredible strength. In 2005, Margaret Hajdinjak lost her son Steven to depression-induced suicide.

On Sunday, May 6, I had the great privilege to attend the second annual Out of the Darkness memorial walk for suicide awareness and prevention, an event that Margaret, with the help and support of community sponsors and volunteers, has established.

Margaret Hajdinjak has taken her tragedy and somehow summoned the strength and conviction to move forward with a community initiative that will support others who have suffered the same fate and most certainly, I believe, prevent the deaths of some who find themselves so alone.

Suicide is the leading cause of death among young adults 15 to 24 years of age—a truly incredible statistic. It's my hope that through the efforts of people like Margaret, her supporters and sponsors and the 300 people who attended the walk on Sunday evening, the stigma attached to mental illness can be lessened. We need people to understand it is okay to talk about suicide and mental illness, so that those affected become aware of the supports that are available, so they realize they are not alone.

I close by thanking all in Thunder Bay who came out to support such an incredible woman and an incredible cause.

CAMERON HIGHLANDERS OF OTTAWA

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Speaker, I am so excited to tell you about a great experience I had on Saturday with the one and only Cameron Highlanders of the city of Ottawa.

In 1856, they were formed as the first volunteer militia rifle company of Ottawa. Over the years, they then became the 43rd Carleton Battalion of Infantry, and they recruited from communities across my riding: Bells Corners, Metcalfe, North Gower and others in Carleton-Mississippi Mills.

This past Saturday, I was with Afghan, Bosnia, Kosovo, Cyprus and Sierra Leone veterans who taught me how to shoot a C7 assault rifle and a 9mm pistol, and I'm happy to say that everyone is still here. Speaker, you can put your arm down; you don't have to worry.

I would like to make a special thank you to Canada's military. As patient as they were with me, they brought VIPs from across the city of Ottawa to show them what the inside of our military is like, and these Afghan veterans—many of them were there—took their time with us.

I would like to make special mention of Sergeant Will Thompson, Sergeant Eric Proulx, Master Corporal Thanuya Reckman, who was the most patient one, because she was assigned to me; and Sergeant Lance Levaq, who would not cheat on my shooting card, Mr. Speaker. He still only gave me three out of 10. I'd also like to say thank you to Major Dan McNeil for taking his time to set this up.

Speaker, I, with every member in this chamber, salute Canada's military, and I want to say to the Cameron Highlanders, thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I wish it was all this fun.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr. John Vanthof: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill 16, An Act to amend the Animals for Research Act and the Dog Owners' Liability Act with respect to pit bulls / *Projet de loi 16, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les animaux destinés à la recherche et la Loi sur la responsabilité des propriétaires de chiens en ce qui a trait aux pit-bulls.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed. The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

Report adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PESTICIDES AMENDMENT ACT (LICENCE FOR COSMETIC PURPOSES), 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES PESTICIDES (LICENCE À DES FINS ESTHÉTIQUES)

Mr. Chudleigh moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 88, An Act to amend the Pesticides Act to provide for the use of pesticides for cosmetic purposes with a licence / *Projet de loi 88, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les*

pesticides afin de prévoir l'utilisation de pesticides à des fins esthétiques en vertu d'une licence.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Basically, this bill allows a professional applicator to apply approved pesticides to control weeds or pests on your lawn or garden.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ASIAN HERITAGE MONTH

Hon. Charles Sousa: May is Asian Heritage Month. This year marks the 10th anniversary of this annual celebration proclaimed across Canada by the federal government in 2002.

In Ontario, our greatest strength is the diversity of our people. The 1.7 million Asian Canadians who make Ontario their home are one of the largest communities in our mosaic of cultures.

Asia covers nearly a third of the world's land mass and includes dozens of countries. The range of traditions, religions, languages and cultures among Asian Canadians is as vast as the continent itself, and the contributions of Asians to our country and our province are just as rich and varied.

Newcomers from China have played an important role in Ontario's economy and society for more than 100 years. China is still a major source of immigration, but in the recent decades Ontario has also welcomed newcomers from all over Asia. From medical researchers like Dr. Tak Wah Mak and Dr. Helen Chan, to environmentalists like David Suzuki, to athletes like world champion skater Patrick Chan, and former Governor General Adrienne Clarkson, Asian communities have made a huge contribution to our prosperity and our quality of life. We are also fortunate to have colleagues of Asian descent in this very House.

I encourage all Canadians and all Ontarians to partake in one of the many festivities taking place across the province to celebrate Asian Heritage Month. This is a time to learn more about the journeys and experiences of our Asian communities and to reflect on the beauty and wisdom of Asian cultures. It's a time to recognize the significant contributions of Asian Canadians to our growth and our prosperity. More importantly, Mr. Speaker, it's a time to rejoice in our diversity and the advantages it brings to Ontario.

ENVIRONMENT INDUSTRY DAY

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'm pleased to recognize that today is Environment Industry Day. This is a day organized by the Ontario Environment Industry Association.

For more than two decades, the Ontario Environment Industry Association has been the voice for the environment and clean tech sector. This is an exciting and growing sector of our economy, and Ontario's environment companies make a significant contribution to our quality of life.

Ontario's environment and clean tech sectors are driving innovation, creating good jobs for Ontarians and helping us build strong and healthy communities and a high quality of life for people across the province and around the world.

1520

The world market for environment and clean tech products and services is estimated to be between \$600 billion and \$800 billion annually, and growing rapidly each and every year. It is also becoming more competitive. The expanding economies of China and India are joining other industrialized countries such as Germany and Denmark in areas of clean energy, water treatment, soil remediation and other growth areas.

Ontario is well positioned to take on the international field in this exciting sector. We have a well-educated and knowledgeable workforce. Our universities and colleges are some of the world's best, fostering innovators, researchers, engineers and professionals who are internationally recognized.

Today, there are close to 3,000 companies—the majority of the country's environment and clean tech companies—calling Ontario home. These are, for the most part, small and medium-sized businesses, which are well-known job creators and economic drivers. Despite their relatively modest size, these companies are already employing 65,000 Ontarians in the areas of clean energy, recycling, waste diversion, engineering and consulting, brownfield remediation, and air, water and waste water purification and treatment.

As the world moves to respond to environmental challenges, Ontario companies are stepping forward and delivering solutions. They are also delivering success. They are contributing \$8 billion in annual revenues and \$1 billion in export earnings.

On behalf of the government and all members of the House, I want to take this opportunity to thank the members of the Ontario Environment Industry Association, and in particular, Alex Gill, Jon Hantho and Derek Webb, for organizing Environment Industry Day. These gentlemen, along with the rest of their industry, are passionate advocates for Ontario's environment and clean tech sector. I hope my colleagues on both sides of the House will take an opportunity to seek them out and speak to them about their work.

My ministry is pleased to partner with the Ontario Environment Industry Association, and we continue to look for ways we can collaborate on initiatives such as Environment Industry Day.

Our government is committed to ensuring that we have a healthy environment and a strong, sustainable future for all Ontarians. We value the important role of Ontario's environment industry in helping us achieve that important goal, a goal that I know we all share.

NURSING WEEK

Hon. Deborah Matthews: It is with great pleasure that I rise during National Nursing Week to acknowledge the invaluable contribution nurses make to our health care system and to thank them for that contribution.

Applause.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Yes, indeed.

This is not the first time I have sung the praises of our nurses in this chamber, nor am I by any means the first Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to do so, but some things bear repeating. It is a fact beyond question that the health care system in which we take such pride in Ontario would not exist at all if we didn't have nurses, and wouldn't be nearly as great as it is if our nurses weren't as great as they are.

Nurses have been called the backbone of our health care system. They have been called the soul of health care, the glue that holds the system together. They are all these things.

For the last eight years plus, this government has tried to show the same commitment to Ontario nurses that they have consistently shown to their patients. Almost as soon as we took office, we began working to change the culture in health care. Our government views nurses as our front-line partners in health care, and that's why we're committed to investing in them throughout their career.

One of the ways we've accomplished this is through the nursing graduate guarantee, which we launched in 2007. To date, over 12,400 nursing graduates have been connected with not just nursing opportunities but full-time nursing opportunities through that program. Today in this province, there are over 15,000 more nurses working than there were in 2003. There are 1,100 more nurse practitioners, who, as of last year, are able to diagnose, prescribe, treat and discharge hospital in-patients. They are also able to order lab tests and complete and sign death certificates.

Twenty-one nurse-practitioner-led clinics are now delivering care to more than 23,000 patients across the province, and these clinics will soon number 26. They are made up of nurse practitioners, registered nurses, registered practical nurses and other providers, and when these 26 nurse-practitioner-led clinics are all operational, they will be caring for more than 40,000 Ontarians.

Helping nurses achieve 70% full-time employment is a big part of that, and we're almost there. Today, more than 66% of Ontario nurses are working full-time. That's an increase of almost 17 percentage points since 2003.

On Sunday, Speaker, our government announced that we will fund an additional 144 nurses to work with mental health workers and school board staff to help students—and their families—with mental health and/or substance abuse issues right in their schools. Because if you're committed to the overall health of our children and youth, then you know it's important to involve nurses.

It's because nurses understand health care as well as anyone anywhere that they've been supportive of our

action plan for health care. This three-pronged plan will start with keeping Ontarians healthy, encouraging them to participate in their own wellness. Clearly, nurses will be there to help them with that.

The action plan will provide patients with faster access to stronger family health care. This will involve bringing primary care under the umbrella of the LHINs, and nurses will be a big part of that transition and, naturally, they will be a big part of delivering that care.

Of course, the action plan will ensure that patients have access to the right care, at the right time, in the right place. This is very much about helping seniors receive as much care as possible closer to home, and that will clearly mean a bigger role for registered nurses, registered practical nurses and nurse practitioners.

A sustainable health care system also requires diverse health care teams. Ensuring patients receive the right care from the right provider means making sure all our nurses are working to their full scope of practice.

Our government is committed to ensuring that Ontarians have the finest health care system possible and that their children and grandchildren do as well. We've come a long way, but we still have a long way to go. It's a source of real comfort to me as health minister that I can count on the nurses of this province to do their part. They always do.

In addition to this being National Nursing Week, this coming Saturday is International Nurses Day. On Saturday, I hope that each and every one of my friends in this chamber can spare at least a quick thought for the everyday contribution of nurses all over the world and say a sincere thank you. I know I will.

ASIAN HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Michael Harris: I rise today to mark the 10th anniversary of Asian Heritage Month. Across the country, people are joining together to celebrate the long and rich history of the Asian community here in Canada and to celebrate the many contributions Asian Canadians have made to develop our prosperous and diverse society.

More than 100 years ago, Asians began emigrating to Canada to build a better future for themselves and their families. The road to prosperity was not easy, yet success would come because of the hard work and values they brought to this country and passed on to their children.

Because of their hard work and commitment to Ontario, Asian Canadians continue to play a large role in shaping our province's economic, political and social character. Every day I see this when I speak to Asian community leaders who have opened businesses, served in politics and volunteered their time to help those around them.

We should use this month of May not only to reflect on the past achievements of the Asian community but also to look ahead to the future as we continue to build and develop our great province together. Our recognition for our country's different cultures helps us to build upon our shared identity as Canadians.

On behalf of the Ontario PC Party, I would like to invite all members of this House and all Ontarians to join in celebrating Asian Heritage Month.

1530

ENVIRONMENT INDUSTRY DAY

Mr. Michael Harris: I also have the opportunity to speak to the Environment Industry Day today. I, too, would like to mark the 12th anniversary of Environment Industry Day here at Queen's Park. The Ontario Environment Industry Association has done an excellent job over the years of bringing together business leaders to support Ontario's growing environmental sector.

Today, ONEIA represents 2,700 environmental companies that employ more than 65,000 highly trained professionals. These men and women continue to develop innovative and efficient clean technologies for air and water pollution, site remediation and decontamination, and solid and hazardous waste management. Collectively, these companies add \$8 billion to our economy and create nearly \$1 billion in exports each and every year.

The Ontario Environment Industry Association understands that the economy and the environment are directly linked. You can't develop new regulations in a silo. You have to work with industry to ensure that the government can complement private sector efforts to improve our environment.

I see so much potential for further growth in this industry. More and more companies are realizing the importance of becoming more environmentally responsible to both protect the environment and increase economic efficiency.

I believe Ontario's environment industry can create and deliver the technologies businesses need to upgrade and enhance their operations, both here in the province and around the world. I would encourage all members of this House to attend the Ontario Environment Industry Association's reception today in the dining room, starting at 5 p.m.

NURSING WEEK

Mrs. Christine Elliott: On behalf of the PC caucus, it's a pleasure to join with Ontarians across the province to recognize National Nursing Week.

In honour of Florence Nightingale's birthday, the International Council of Nurses declared May 12 as International Nurses Day. Activist and author Nightingale advocated for better care and hospital conditions for British soldiers. Through several hundred publications, hospital planning and her work on the social determinants of health, Nightingale actively contributed to the professionalization of hospital services.

In honour of this tradition, the government of Canada declared the second week of May as a time for Canadians to pay tribute to our own world-class nurses. Today, nurses from across our province carry on Nightingale's

legacy through their commitment to public service and advocacy.

Nursing Week is a time for Ontarians to recognize the dedicated service of over 150,000 registered nurses, registered practical nurses, nurses and nurse practitioners that care for our loved ones. These skilled, hard-working professionals commit their lives to the well-being of all those around them. Their commitment and dedication to serve in their communities and to care for those in need is an inspiration to all Ontarians.

On behalf of the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus, I'd like to offer my most sincere congratulations and thanks for the phenomenal work you do and wish you all the best as you celebrate this most deserved week of recognition.

ENVIRONMENT INDUSTRY DAY

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'm pleased to stand today to make a statement on Environment Industry Day. Today, we have a really good opportunity to speak with the environment industry. I want to recognize those who are working in the clean tech sector. They're doing an important part of the work to protect the environment.

I think that Ontarians are doing their part as well, as individuals. When they make consumer choices, they are demanding that we have a green industry here in Ontario.

Corporate responsibility is a key pillar in the environmental agenda, and industry has an important role to play in cleaning up and protecting our environment. Industry is a key stakeholder, and they are responding to the consumer demand for green choices and sustainable business.

But we also need to remember that corporate responsibility does not take the place of good government policy. We need leadership, and we need to see action from this government on this file. It's time to address the growing environmental crisis we face at a government level.

NURSING WEEK

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm happy to add my voice to the celebration of Nursing Week. First, I want to thank the 113,423 registered nurses, the 40,457 registered practical nurses and the 2,061 nurse practitioners who practise here in Ontario. Happy Nursing Week.

Then, I want to talk to you about a registered practical nurse called Peter Burrell. Peter was punched in the face by a confused, strong gentleman while trying to talk him out of walking in the middle of the night in the middle of the winter while in a hospital with no shoes or jacket on. He received very little compensation for his injuries, including broken teeth and lacerations on his face. Unfortunately, that violence is repeated in many long-term-care homes and many hospitals. Our nurses deserve better than this. Let's commit, on Nursing Week, to protecting every single one of those nurses who work for us.

Merci pour votre travail.

ASIAN HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Michael Prue: It's my privilege and my honour to stand today and talk about Asian Heritage Month.

People who understand history, particularly ancient history, will know that the whole world has a great debt of gratitude to the cultures of Asia. It was there that the first farming took place. It was there that the first towns were built, the first division of labour. It was there that metallurgy was developed so that we could leave the Stone Age and go into the age of copper and of tin and eventually of iron. And it is there that was the crucible of most of the world's great developments.

It was there that the great religions all found their start, because, remember, Asia starts all the way from Israel and Turkey all the way over to China. Even today, all of the great religions of the world found their roots in Asia. And it was from there that people came forward to develop most of the arts and culture that we today know in the entire human race.

Canada has had a long tradition of immigration, but it has not always been a proud one. You know, when we think back, we can think of the head tax that was put on Chinese Canadians to make sure they could not come here and the enormous sums of money they had to pay to get off the boat in order to come and work in hazardous conditions building our railway.

We know what happened to the Japanese Canadians during the Second World War, as they were taken from their lands along the coast of British Columbia and shipped inland, where they lost all of their belongings, their boats, their means of livelihood, and were treated as enemy aliens, although almost all of them were born in Canada.

We also know what happened to some of the Asians who were on the Komagata Maru, those being members of the Sikh faith, when they tried to land in Vancouver and were not allowed off the boat.

Today we are much more enlightened. Today we recognize the importance of Asian culture. We recognize the traditions that the people bring with them. We recognize that their ability to work hard, their love of family, their moral beliefs are all exactly what this country needs. Today I'm very proud to say that Canadians have embraced Asia and Asian cultures. Today we are proud to say that what is coming from that entire massive continent to come and join us here in Canada is very welcome. And today we are all very proud to say that Asian culture and Canadian culture can be and are one and the same.

PETITIONS

WATER QUALITY

Mr. John O'Toole: It's really important to be close to the Speaker. It helps.

I'm very thankful to one of my constituents, Luverne Baron from the Model "A" Acres Bed and Breakfast. She

has sent all these petitions because on the weekend it was Maple Fest in my riding of Durham and they presented these petitions there.

"Whereas under the Health Protection and Promotion Act, Ontario regulation 319/08, public health inspectors are required to undertake risk assessments of small drinking water systems;

"Whereas many of these small drinking water systems are located in homes operating bed and breakfasts," in my riding of Durham and in Ontario;

"Whereas private homes that are the sites of bed and breakfasts already have potable drinking water used by the homeowners and their families every day;

"Whereas many of these bed and breakfasts have established the quality of their drinking water through years of regular testing," which I would encourage;

"Whereas these home-based businesses are facing high costs to comply with the new requirements of regulation 319/08;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health amend Ontario regulation 319/08 to give the testing track record of a small drinking water system greater weight in the risk assessment process;

"Furthermore we, the undersigned, ask that bed and breakfasts operated within a private home with a drinking water system meeting all the requirements of a private home not be subject to" this onerous "regulation 319/08."

I'm pleased to sign and support it and present it to Manak, one of the pages on his last week here.

1540

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Nickel Belt.

"Whereas there are a growing number of reported cases of abuse, neglect and substandard care for our seniors in long-term care...; and

"Whereas people with complaints have limited options, and frequently don't complain because they fear repercussions, which suggests too many seniors are being left in vulnerable situations without independent oversight; and

"Whereas Ontario is one of only two provinces in Canada where the Ombudsman does not have independent oversight of long-term-care homes. We need accountability, transparency and consistency in our long-term-care homes;

"We petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to expand the Ombudsman's mandate to include Ontario's long-term-care homes in order to protect our most vulnerable seniors."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask my favourite page, Ranbir, to bring it to the Clerk.

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

Mr. Kim Craiton: I'm pleased to introduce this petition, which is quite similar to my colleague's from the third party.

"Whereas the Ontario Ombudsman, who is an officer of the Legislature, is not allowed to provide trusted, independent investigations of complaints into areas of hospitals, long-term-care homes, school boards, children's aid societies, police, retirement homes and universities; and

"Whereas Ontario is the only province in Canada not allowing their Ombudsman to investigate any of these areas; and

"Whereas people wronged by these institutions are left feeling helpless and most have nowhere else to turn for help to correct systemic issues;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Grant the Ombudsman the power to investigate hospitals, long-term-care homes, school boards, children's aid societies, police, retirement homes and universities."

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I have a petition to present to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the closure of the Bluewater Youth Centre will have a negative economic impact on Goderich and the surrounding area; and

"Whereas there is a need to deal with overcrowding in the Ontario correctional system; and

"Whereas the federal Bill C-10, Safe Streets and Communities Act, will increase the population in the Ontario correctional system over the next four years; and

"Whereas the Bluewater Youth Centre would need very little retrofitting and the staff would need minimal retraining to open as a medium-secure correctional facility which could hold more than 200 beds required by the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services; and

"Whereas specialized treatment programs within the correctional system such as drug treatment, mental health issues, could be offered with the skilled support staff currently in place; and

"Whereas we believe that this is the most economical way to add an additional 200 beds to the Ontario correctional system, as the building is in place and staff are currently hired to run such a facility;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government engage in meaningful community and employee consultation in order to find alternate uses within the youth services or correctional services system for this facility, thereby preventing job

losses and economic hardship for an area already badly impacted by plant closures and tornado damage.”

I fully support this petition, I'll affix my signature and give it to Vincent to deliver to the table.

TOURISM

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I have a petition which reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas tourism is a vital contributor to the economy of northwestern Ontario, bringing hundreds of millions of dollars into the province's economy from other provinces and the United States, unlike other regions in the province whose target demographic is people who already reside in Ontario;

“Whereas northwestern Ontario's tourist economy has been under attack by government policies such as the cancellation of the spring bear hunt, the harmonized sales tax (HST), the strong Canadian dollar and difficulties passing through the Canada/United States border; and

“Whereas studies have shown that tourism in the northwest nets significantly more money per stay than other regions of the province, in part due to visitors frequenting historical sites, parks and roadside attractions that they learn about through travel information centres;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“To keep the travel information centres in Fort Frances, Kenora and Rainy River open permanently to ensure that northwestern Ontario maximizes the benefit of our tourist economy.”

I proudly support this and will give this to page Shanice to deliver.

RADIATION SAFETY

Mr. Reza Moridi: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas subsection 6(2)8 of the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act identifies dental hygienists as persons deemed to be qualified to operate an X-ray machine; and

“Whereas dental hygienists need to be able to prescribe X-rays and to be designated as radiation protection officers in order to provide their patients/clients with safe and convenient access to a medically necessary procedure, as is already the case in many comparable jurisdictions;

“We, the dental hygienists working in Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To express support for the motion filed on April 17, 2012, by the member from Richmond Hill that asks the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to establish a committee consisting of experts to review the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act (1990) and its regulations and make recommendations on how to modernize this act and bring it to 21st-century standards, so that it becomes responsive to the safety of patients/clients and the public and to include all forms of radiation that are currently

used in the health care sector for diagnostic and therapeutic purposes.”

I fully agree with the petition, Mr. Speaker. I sign it and pass it on to page Noah.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. John Yakubuski: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas a report from Ontario's Auditor General on the province's air ambulance service, Ornge, found a web of questionable financial deals where tens of millions of taxpayers' dollars have been wasted and public safety compromised;

“Whereas Ornge officials created a ‘mini-conglomerate’ of private entities that enriched former senior officers and left taxpayers on the hook for \$300 million in debt;

“Whereas government funding for Ornge climbed 20% to \$700 million, while the number of patients it airlifted actually declined;

“Whereas a subsidiary of Ornge bought the head office building in Mississauga for just over \$15 million and then leased it back to Ornge at a rate 40% higher than fair market rent;

“Whereas the Liberal Minister of Health completely failed in her duty to provide proper oversight of Ornge;

“Whereas this latest scandal follows the eHealth boondoggle where \$2 billion in health dollars have been wasted;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“The government of Ontario immediately appoint a special all-party select committee to investigate the scandals surrounding Ornge.”

I enthusiastically sign this petition and support it and I will pass it down with Shaumik.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I'd like to thank all the armchair quarterbacks for all the noise during petitions. Thanks very much. I appreciate it.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Oxford, thank you.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I thank you very much for the opportunity. I have a petition here signed by a great number of constituents in my riding who hand-delivered it to me at my office, and I just wanted to read it on their behalf.

“Whereas Bill 13 is unnecessary as an anti-bullying measure because Ontarians already have Bill 157; and

“Whereas Bill 13 promotes radical revisions to school instruction on sex and gender that a majority of parents do not support; and

“Whereas legislation is not the way to implement equity education (this should rather be addressed by

teacher training, after wider parental consultation, in a way which respects the views of people of faith);

"We, the undersigned, petition the assembly to vote against Bill 13."

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to present this petition on behalf of the people of my riding.

DOG OWNERSHIP

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas currently the law takes the onus off of owners that raise violent dogs by making it appear that violence is a matter of genetics; and

"Whereas the Dog Owners' Liability Act does not clearly define a pit bull, nor is it enforced equally across the province, as pit bulls are not an acknowledged breed;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly passes Bill 16, Public Safety Related to Dogs Statute Law Amendment Act, 2011, into law."

I add my name, along with the tens of thousands, to save another 1,000 dogs that have been euthanized. I'm going to sign my name. I'm going to give it to Sarah. She's going to deliver it to the table.

1550

RADIATION SAFETY

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas subsection 6(2)8 of the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act identifies dental hygienists as persons deemed to be qualified to operate an X-ray machine; and

"Whereas dental hygienists need to be able to prescribe X-rays and to be designated as radiation protection officers in order to provide their patients/clients with safe and convenient access to a medically necessary procedure, as is already the case in many comparable jurisdictions;

"We, the dental hygienists working in Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To express support for the motion filed on April 17, 2012, by the member from Richmond Hill that asks the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to establish a committee consisting of experts to review the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act (1990) and its regulations and make recommendations on how to modernize this act and bring it to 21st-century standards, so that it becomes responsive to the safety of patients/clients and the public and to include all forms of radiation that are currently used in the health care sector for diagnostic and therapeutic purposes."

As I agree with this petition, I will sign it and send it to the table with page Gillian.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Jack MacLaren: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the ... horse racing and breeding industry generates \$2 billion of economic activity, mostly in rural Ontario;

"Whereas more than 60,000 Ontarians are employed by Ontario's horse racing and breeding industry;

"Whereas 20% of the funds generated by the OLG slots-at-racetracks program is reinvested in racetracks and the horse racing and breeding industry, while 75% is returned to the government of Ontario;

"Whereas the OLG slots-at-racetracks program generates \$1.3 billion a year for health care and other spending, making it the most profitable form of gaming in the province for OLG;

"Whereas the government has announced plans to cancel the slots-at-racetracks program, a decision that will cost the government \$1.1 billion per year and threatens more than 60,000 jobs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"Call on the government of Ontario to:

"(1) protect the \$1.1 billion of revenue the government received annually because of the OLG slots-at-racetracks program.

"(2) direct OLG to honour the contracts with race-tracks and protect the horse racing and breeding industry by continuing the OLG slots-at-racetracks revenue-sharing program."

I agree with the petition. I sign it and will give it to page Ranbir to take to the table.

TOURISM

Mr. John Vanthof: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas tourism is a vital contributor to the economy of northwestern Ontario, bringing hundreds of millions of dollars into the province's economy from other provinces and the United States, unlike other regions in the province whose target demographic is people who already reside in Ontario;

"Whereas northwestern Ontario's tourist economy has been under attack by government policies such as the cancellation of the spring bear hunt, the harmonized sales tax (HST), the strong Canadian dollar and difficulties passing through the Canada/United States border; and

"Whereas studies have shown that tourism in the northwest nets significantly more money per stay than other regions of the province, in part due to visitors frequenting historical sites, parks and" other "roadside attractions that they learn about through travel information centres;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly" of Ontario "as follows:

"To keep the travel information centres in Fort Frances, Kenora and Rainy River open permanently to

ensure that northwestern Ontario maximizes the benefit of our tourist economy.”

I fully agree with this petition and send it down with page Manak.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

HEALTHY HOMES RENOVATION TAX CREDIT ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LE CRÉDIT D'IMPÔT POUR L'AMÉNAGEMENT DU LOGEMENT AXÉ SUR LE BIEN-ÊTRE

Mr. Bradley, on behalf of Mr. Duncan, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 2, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement a healthy homes renovation tax credit / Projet de loi 2, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts en vue de mettre en oeuvre le crédit d'impôt pour l'aménagement du logement axé sur le bien-être.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you—

Mr. John Yakabuski: The minister doesn't want to speak to this?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Mr. Bradley has moved third reading of Bill 2 and Mr. Naqvi of Ottawa Centre stood up. I'm not sure what's going on here.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll be sharing my time with the member for Ottawa Centre.

Do you want me to continue speaking now?

Interjection.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Thank you very much. The member for Ottawa Centre will be very detailed in his analysis of this bill and will be very helpful. I simply want to add just a few comments at this time because, as I say, the member for Ottawa Centre has engaged in much participation in this in terms of its development.

I can recall, Mr. Speaker, during the election campaign talking about this with many people at the door, and they were eager to see this coming into effect. I said to them that when this was introduced into the House, I was confident that all members of the House would see the virtues of the provisions of this bill and would want to pass it expeditiously. I know that members of the third party in the House were eager to see the bill proceed as well, but somehow it was being slowed down, and I don't know how that was happening. Someone informed me that every time a member of the Conservative Party got up, the member from the Conservative Party would in fact call for adjournment of the House or adjournment of the debate, one of the two, and the bells would then ring for some 30 minutes and no debate would be taking place.

Now, this appeared to be—heaven forbid, I've not known the member for Pembroke to be one who would want to delay good legislation, so I was quite surprised. I consulted around and I said, “Surely members of the Conservative Party over there would not want to delay something that is good for seniors in our community.” But indeed, that has been the case. This is why I'm particularly pleased that we have now moved to third reading of this bill.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Do you know what the bill is?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I certainly do. It's the home renovation tax credit. It's particularly helpful for seniors because there are—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Could you tell us what's in there? Because I know they were talking to you at the door.

Hon. James J. Bradley: No. It helps seniors stay in their homes longer. It helps family members sharing a home with a senior. It benefits taxpayers by relieving pressures on the long-term-care home costs.

Interjection.

Hon. James J. Bradley: It supports 10,500 jobs per year—

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: He just wants to get it accurate; he wants to get it right.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I want to be accurate with this, so I'm making—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I'm glad you're all having a discussion across the floor with each other. You might want to go through the Chair. And could we take it down a couple of decibels over there? Thank you.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I want to be directly accurate on this. It says as well that it will support about \$800 million in home renovation activity. So, if passed, effective October 1, 2011, senior homeowners and tenants and people who share a home with a senior relative would be allowed to claim a refundable tax credit of up to \$1,500 for expenses related to permanent modifications to the home. To continue to meet the fiscal targets, the cost of this program would be offset by savings in other areas, because that's the approach that we're taking with these initiatives.

Mr. John Yakabuski: What other areas?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Well, every time we mention an area—I'm hearing interjections, and I'll try to answer them through you, Mr. Speaker. Every time the government does try to bring forward an issue which would save money, the third party will have its comments, but the official opposition then begins to complain.

It reminds me of question period, and I know you enjoy question period when you're sitting in your seat in the House, Mr. Speaker. The question period consists of about the first half, or now two thirds of question period, where the Conservatives get up and demand that the government cut further. But once the media leaves—of course, that can be earlier than halfway through—the gallery up there, what happens then is that they—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): We have a point of order.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Point of order: I'm wondering if we're discussing the behaviour of the Conservative Party, the Progressive Conservatives or the nature of the bill. I'm wondering if we could stick to the content of the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I appreciate the member's comment, but that would certainly be my decision if he's drifting from the topic. I do believe that I've noticed a little bit, so maybe the member could get back to the topic.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Certainly. I always enjoy being chastised for wandering and will keep that in the back of my mind when I hear members on the other side of the House wandering from the exact text of the bill.

It's similar, actually, to the federal 2009 home renovation tax credit, for up to 380,000 people could benefit from this credit each year.

What I want to say—and I want to be relatively brief on this because the member for Ottawa Centre is very good. I know that the federal member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, Ms. Cheryl Gallant, would be in favour of this bill. She's very highly regarded in the House of Commons. She sometimes tends to overshadow the provincial member, but I'm sure she would be very pleased with this particular piece of legislation.

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I guess my plea, because it's part of the third reading in the House, is that we deal with this bill expeditiously. We have had a lot of debate on second reading, though that debate has been interrupted by the—what I would call reckless—ringing of the bells, unnecessarily, by the official opposition. That's a subjective evaluation; I understand that's a subjective evaluation.

I would hope very much that, having had a full discussion of this bill—I believe it has gone to committee; there has been discussion there as well. Although neither of the members who are sitting here in the House today were here in the Harris government, you may recall that at that time, bills rarely went to committee. There are very few people in this House who would remember, if they were here during the Michael Harris Conservative years, that very few bills went to committee. That will surprise the Speaker, because he recognizes the importance of going to committee for detailed analysis of a bill of this kind, and perhaps to have some public hearings where necessary. Well, I have to say, that rarely happened under the previous Conservative government. I'm pleased to see that now, since our government took office in 2003, that has been routine procedure, to go to committee.

What I am saying now is, we've had the initial introduction. We've then had a full and complete debate on second reading. We've gone to committee. The bill has been strengthened in any way that is deemed appropriate. We've heard from people from outside, heard from members of the opposition, heard from the government, and now the bill is at third reading.

This is where I'm going to relinquish the rest of the time that is available for debating this to the very capable member for Ottawa Centre.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Let me first start with thanking the member from St. Catharines, the Minister of the Environment, for that very apt and succinct summary of Bill 2. I think he really hit all the highlights in his remarks, and I thank him for leaving me only 52 minutes to talk about this very important bill.

I think it really provided an executive summary that I will then rely on to give you more detail. It was just perfect. It was like going through the index of all the important elements of this bill, which gives me the opportunity to talk about this extremely important piece of legislation in far greater detail so that those who are watching at home—I know there are a lot of folks at home who take an interest in these proceedings, especially seniors in our communities, who want to learn more about the healthy homes renovation tax credit: what it means; how it will work, if passed by this legislation, of course; and what kind of benefit it will give to them, because they've been hearing about this particular tax credit for some time. They did hear about this—

Mr. Jeff Leal: Susan Eng, from CARP.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I will speak about Susan Eng, from CARP, because she's very supportive of this bill.

We've been talking about this for some time. This has been asked for seniors for a long time. It was part of our Liberal Party's platform in the last election campaign, and as you can tell by the number of the bill, Bill 2, this is one of the earliest bills to be tabled in this House after the government was formed, speaking to our desire, obviously, to fulfill our commitment that we made to the people of Ontario, especially to the seniors in our province, across the communities.

But also, it shows how much importance we put on seniors and how much we, as a government and as a party, want to work towards ensuring that seniors have a good-quality life in their own homes and their own communities. I think this is very indicative of our desire to ensure that our seniors are healthy, that our seniors are living in their own homes. That's why the very first piece of legislation that we brought and tabled in this House was the healthy homes renovation tax credit.

It's a great honour to rise today to talk on the third reading of the healthy homes renovation tax credit. That's the simpler name for this legislation. The more technical name is An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement a healthy homes renovation tax credit. That's the more technical name. As folks at home know, legislation has very technical names to them, but I think it's easy to have a simpler name to reflect them, hence the healthy homes renovation tax credit because it really highlights what this piece of legislation is about. It's making sure that our seniors' homes are healthy, that they are able to renovate those homes and get some sort of a tax credit that will enable our seniors to continue to

live at home. I will be speaking to more detail of this bill, and of course speak of some examples from my community as well because I think it's very important that we highlight what's happening in our community, the impact it's having in our community, and how people are going to be able to benefit from this legislation as well.

My riding of Ottawa Centre, which I'm very proud to represent, is home to many seniors who live in their own homes. As I'm always speaking to them—I do knock on a lot of doors almost on a weekly basis and visit seniors, be it in apartment buildings or in condo buildings or at home—they tell me again and again that they want to live in their home. They don't want to move to a long-term-care facility. They don't want to go to a nursing home. They definitely don't want to go to a hospital. What they want to do is to continue to live in their own home because that's where they have their independence, that's where they live with dignity, and in a lot of instances, especially that I found in my riding of Ottawa Centre, be it neighbourhoods like the Glebe or Westboro or Hintonburg, a nice up-and-coming area in my riding, or Carleton Heights, where I live, or Carlington, not only seniors or parents are living in their homes, but their children are living not that far. So they're close to their grandkids. There's that opportunity for the family unit to stay together within the same neighbourhood. So there's even a heightened need or a want to continue to live in their own home because they're close to their family. They're close to grandkids. They're able to assist their children in the upbringing of their kids.

My parents don't live in Ottawa, so I can tell you that it would be a great benefit if they did live close, especially now that I have a young baby at home.

Applause.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much.

It would be great to have them around close by, but they travel from Oakville, and my mother-in-law is there at home right now with my wife and young Rafi. My mother is coming next week. She's very excited to come out and help the family.

So there's many benefits of having seniors continue to live in their home, because of the support structure they're able to build by living in their community. They have friends. They have family. They of course have neighbours that they rely on. They're involved in local communities, local activities like the community association. I think we all benefit, not just the seniors, because the seniors have so much to offer from their experience, from things they have done in their lives. Having them in our neighbourhoods I think is a win-win for all of us. That's exactly what this legislation is attempting to do, making sure we make it that much easier for seniors to continue to live at home and hence to try to create an incentive by providing them with a renovation tax credit.

Speaker, during second reading I outlined for you how this proposed new act would amend the Taxation Act, 2007, to implement an innovative new tax credit, one that would help Ontario seniors relieve the pressures on the

health care system and boost economic growth, another very important element, because part of the equation here is not only that seniors continue to live in their home, but because of the renovations they will have to engage in to make their home more accessible, it has a great economic spinoff, because it really will employ the renovation sector, which is a big sector in Ontario, as we all know. We have heard from folks within the renovation sector. It employs thousands of Ontarians. I believe it's at least a billion-dollar—if not over a billion-dollar—industry in the province, and this tax credit helps in that it boosts economic growth as well.

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Today, I would like to elaborate on my earlier remarks to let you know why this important act needs your support and the support of all the other members in the Legislature. The proposed new healthy homes renovation tax credit would make it more affordable—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I don't need the member from Renfrew talking to himself out loud, okay? And I don't need a cross-dialogue on the floor. You seem to have raised the decibel level in the chamber. I don't want to have to warn you once more. Okay? Thank you.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you, Speaker.

We know that many seniors today want to stay in their homes as they get older, but often homes are not designed to accommodate people with mobility issues. This is probably more true for older neighbourhoods where homes were built a long time ago. I think of neighbourhoods like Centretown in my community, in Ottawa Centre, where some of the homes—beautiful homes, by the way; some of them have a heritage designation and go back to the Victorian era—a lot of the homes are anywhere from 80 to 100 years old, and of course they're not accessible. They have steps; they have fairly steep staircases to the second floor; they have attics and low basements, making it difficult for seniors to live in that atmosphere. But they have been living in those homes for a long, long time, so I think it's really apt, at least from my perspective, from my community's perspective, looking at some of the older neighbourhoods, where this tax credit is going to be extremely—of a lot of help.

We have spoken with Ontarians like Sue, whose parents don't want to move, despite mobility issues and the excessive challenges of their homes. Here's what Sue told us:

"Both my parents are 88 years old, and they've lived in the same house for 40 years. It's a two-storey, four-bedroom home—they love it—and they want to stay. My job is to keep them happy and comfortable in their home for as long as they want to be there, and for as long as it's safe for them to be there."

That's what Sue said about her parents, who live in an old home. Just as I was mentioning about Centretown, in my community, that's not a unique situation. I think it's a fairly common situation across the province, be it urban

communities or rural communities, where people like Sue and her parents are facing the challenge to continue to live in their home because the house is older and is not as accessible, especially for aging parents.

We want to help Ontarians like Sue's parents stay in their homes as they get older, and to do so, we need to ensure that their homes are accessible, functional and safe. Our proposed new healthy homes renovation tax credit would, if passed, help seniors with the cost of home modifications to make their much-loved homes the best place for them to live and age. We are proposing that this credit be a permanent and refundable personal income tax credit that would cover 15% of up to \$10,000 in eligible alterations to the principal Ontario residence of a senior. By improving accessibility, mobility and safety, the credit would help more seniors stay in their homes for longer periods of time.

I would just like to remind you how we are proposing that the healthy homes renovation tax credit would work. Effective October 1, 2011—so, retroactive to October 1, 2011. As I mentioned earlier, this was a platform commitment that was made by the Ontario Liberal Party in the last provincial election, and in keeping with that promise, we have introduced this legislation which, if passed, will apply retroactively to October 1, 2011, where senior homeowners and tenants who are 65 years of age or older, as well as people who share a home with a senior relative, would be allowed to claim a refundable tax credit of up to \$1,500 for expenses on permanent modifications to the home. These modifications would have to improve accessibility or otherwise help a senior be more functional or mobile at home, or they would have to reduce the risk of harm to the senior in and around the home. In either case, these must be the type of modifications that would typically be done for a person with an impairment, to improve accessibility, mobility or functionality in and around the home. Renovations that simply improve the value of the home would not be eligible, and I think that's an important qualifier that we should know.

Just as an example, renovations that would make a bathroom safer for seniors with accessibility challenges, such as installing a walk-in bathtub or wheel-in shower or adding grab bars around a toilet, would be eligible under this tax credit. But redecorating a bathroom just to make it look better or to add resale value—by adding a Jacuzzi tub, for instance, or ceramic tiles—would not be eligible under this renovation tax credit, the point being that the tax credit will apply to modifications, to changes, to alterations, to renovations that are actually going to make the home more functional, mobile or accessible for the senior who will be using it.

Detailed rules for eligibility are set out clearly in the proposed legislation. To claim the tax credit, seniors or their family members would have to get receipts from suppliers and contractors, helping to ensure that these amounts are reported by vendors for tax purposes. They would then claim the tax credit on their personal income tax returns.

Speaker, I would like to draw your attention to the fact that we are not proposing to unduly restrict this tax credit by allowing only seniors to claim it. Another very important point which I want Ontarians who are listening to this debate or watching this debate to know: We are aware of demographic realities. We know that many Ontario families across the province share their homes with a senior relative. Many of us know members of the sandwich generation; some of us might be members ourselves. A growing number of Ontario families are raising their children while also providing support for Mom or Dad or another elderly relative. That's why we are proposing to allow people who modify their homes to accommodate a senior relative who lives with them to claim this tax credit as well. That means, for example, that a family who renovates their home to install a first-floor-occupancy suite to accommodate an elderly relative would also be able to claim the credit, provided other criteria are met. I think that's an important point and something that we are starting to see more and more.

I have the case of a good friend of mine—André, again, lives in Centretown and lives with his family, a wife and a young son, in a beautiful old two-storey heritage home. The mom lives on the first floor. This way, the family is together. The units are sort of divided, so both families have their independence, but it's also giving an opportunity for my friend to be able to look after his mother whenever she needs it. She's very able and she lives a very active lifestyle, which is fantastic, but it also ensures that that great relationship, that bond, is there. Those are the types of situations that will qualify through this tax credit.

There are probably a lot of people who are perhaps considering that their elderly relative, a mom or a dad or both, move in with them, and want to see if they can renovate part of the house so that they can accommodate their relative. This tax credit, if passed in law, will be able to grant that benefit to either the child, the person who owns the home, or the elderly relative who may be using it.

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The credit will be calculated as 15% of up to \$10,000 in total eligible expenses for a senior's principal residence in Ontario for a calendar year, for a maximum credit of \$1,500 each year, whether that principal residence is theirs alone or shared with family.

I would like to provide a few examples just to illustrate how the tax credit will help Ontario families.

Helen is a widow in her early 70s who lives in Etobicoke. The arthritis in her hands means that she sometimes finds it difficult to complete even simple household tasks such as washing dishes or making herself a cup of tea. She paid \$400 to have a hands-free tap installed in her kitchen to make these tasks a little easier. Helen would keep her receipt and claim \$400 on her 2012 tax return to receive a credit of \$60.

For another example of how the credit will help Ontario families, take Clarence, who was 68 years old when he had a mild stroke. He successfully recovered most of

his mobility, but his son and daughter-in-law were worried about him living on his own, so they modified their home to allow Clarence to move in with them. They paid their contractor \$8,000 for various renovations, including a ramp to make the climb up to their front porch easier, and grab bars and non-slip flooring to make the bathroom safer. They would keep their receipt and claim \$8,000 on their 2012 tax return to receive a credit of \$1,200.

These are real examples. I think these are examples that we probably hear on a regular basis. These are the types of things that seniors face as they face different health-related challenges. These are our constituents whom we, I think, have spoken to at different community events or visited at their home, where a small, little change or alteration will make it easier for them to continue to live in their home.

I think another very good example and an easy one to remember is a simple ramp. Most of the homes have front porches and staircases involved. If you've had any mobility challenges—for example, a lot of seniors now have to use a walker in their later years of life. It's difficult for them to climb even two or three steps to get to the front door. Even if they live in a bungalow type of situation, they probably have a couple of staircases. Building a small ramp makes it easier for them to be able to get into their home. You and I think about it and say, "Well, it's a small cost, but it's something relatively easy to do." Yes, absolutely, but I think for a senior who is living on a fixed income, living in their own home, giving a tax credit up to 10% on building that ramp is going to be of some help to them. It will provide that incentive for them to not just put off building that ramp to another time but hopefully get it done as soon as possible, because it will ensure, one, that they continue to be comfortable, and two, I agree with the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing in saying that it's a prevention. It will allow for them not to get into any future injuries.

I think that another good example is something we hear about all the time. Especially if you are speaking with doctors and nurses, they'll tell you—or social workers who assist seniors in communities and personal support workers will tell you—that one of the highest incidences of injuries that seniors face are in the bathroom: slip and fall, right? No fault of their own, but it's just the reality that a lot of seniors slip and fall in the bathroom. Bathrooms get wet. They may have mobility issues. Bathrooms tend to be smaller. They need to grab on to things. They have to leave their walker outside or their wheelchair outside to use the bathroom for the purposes they need. That's where, if they are coming out of the bathtub or if they are just using the toilet, they may run into an accident which can result in some serious consequences. Especially if the injury is a significant one and they are not able to seek out help right away, it could have quite a long-lasting impact on them. By ensuring that a senior will be able to put grab bars in the bathroom, make the floor non-slip or change the bathtub to a more

walk-in type of bathtub, it goes a long way in terms of reducing the incidence of injury in their home condition. We know how much you need the bathroom—you use it multiple times in a day. This is a significant—it's not only a safety thing for a senior, but a huge cost savings for the system, because every time a senior faces injury, they may need to call an ambulance or go to a hospital, and that's a serious cost. I think that by a very small measure like this healthy homes renovation tax credit, we can make a real impact in terms of the health of our seniors and their quality of life.

For the 2012 tax year only, the \$10,000 maximum will apply to expenses paid or payable from October 1, 2011, to December 31, 2012. For 2013 and all subsequent years, the maximum will apply to expenses paid or payable from January 1 to December 31 of that year. So it will go to the regular calendar year from 2013 onwards.

To put more money back into people's pockets, we are proposing that this tax credit be fully refundable. This means that seniors or their family members would get the full benefit of the amount they qualify for, regardless of whether they are paying income tax for the year. So even if you're not paying income tax, even if you're getting a refund, you'll still get this tax credit. You'll still get this money back to you. So it's not only in instances where you owe taxes and then the government will subtract the amount it owes to you; you'll get this tax credit regardless, whether you are paying taxes or not.

To help more Ontario families, we are proposing that there be no income testing for eligibility for this tax credit. So, if you're a low-income senior, a mid-income senior or a high-income senior, you will qualify for this tax credit. This means that seniors or people who share a home with a senior relative at all income levels could qualify for this particular tax credit.

Speaker, I would like to point out that while this proposed tax credit is focused on seniors, there are also a number of different programs to help Ontarians, including non-seniors with disabilities who have challenges with accessibility and mobility at home.

The assistive devices program, for example, provides consumer-centred support and funding to people with long-term physical disabilities, including seniors living independently, through access to more than 8,000 assistive devices responsive to their individual needs.

Other programs specifically help people with disabilities stay in their homes. These include the Ontario and federal medical expense tax credit for eligible seniors relating to home modifications or home construction costs for a patient who lacks normal physical development or has a mobility impairment. The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp. offers a residential rehabilitation assistance program for persons with disabilities. And the Ontario March of Dimes offers a home and vehicle modifications program, which was established by the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services.

In addition, there are a number of tax exemptions that assist people of all ages with disabilities. These include sales tax exemptions on the purchase of various medical

and assistive devices and property tax exemptions for certain alterations that help people with a disability.

We expect that, if passed, the proposed tax credit will cost the province about \$60 million in 2011-12. This amount—and this is a very important point, given the current economic climate we are in and the need for us to eliminate our deficit by 2017-18—this amount of \$60 million will be offset by savings that have been identified from lower spending on business support programs in the Ministry of Economic Development and Innovation, as well as lower-than-forecast costs for tax-related expenditures in the Ministry of Finance. This is our new reality. We have to balance new spending aimed at helping Ontario families with the lingering effects on the economy brought about by this time of significant global change, upheaval and uncertainty.

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Over the last generation, governments of all political stripes have accumulated debt. Recently, when Minister Duncan presented the 2012 Ontario budget, he spelled out the realities of our post-recession world. This includes forecasts for slower and more modest economic growth. As we experience slower economic growth, it's going to take strategic thinking to ensure our families are taken care of while we keep the economy moving forward.

So we designed our proposed healthy homes renovation tax credit to help provide a much-needed economic stimulus in response to the current economic conditions while also helping Ontario families.

How would that tax credit do that? By helping Ontario seniors make the renovations they need to stay safely in their own homes, the tax credit would support about \$800 million of home renovation activity and around 10,500 jobs throughout the Ontario economy each and every year.

This proposed new tax credit is smart policy for our times. Given the reality of an extended period of more modest economic growth, helping seniors stay healthy and independent at home will become increasingly important as Ontario's population ages, because helping seniors stay in their homes or in their families' homes rather than in a long-term-care home is more efficient and cost-effective. Helping seniors stay in their homes or in their families' homes also frees up health resources for patients occupying costly beds in hospitals who could be best cared for in a long-term-care home.

Ontario's senior population is expected to more than double over the next 25 years, to 4.1 million seniors by 2036 from approximately 1.8 million seniors in 2010. Regardless of how you look at the numbers, there is no doubt that this dramatic demographic change will bring significant fiscal challenges. So our government has already started looking for affordable solutions and meaningful alternatives to help seniors lead healthy, active and independent lives.

Our aging-at-home strategy is a great example. We have invested \$1.1 billion over four years in this strategy to provide community-based services for seniors and

their caregivers to allow them to stay healthy and live independently with dignity in their homes.

In fact, we have made it a priority to ensure that Ontario seniors can live safe, active and healthy lives, and I'd like to highlight a few of our accomplishments for seniors over the past eight years.

We have expanded home care services to about 500,000 Ontarians each year.

In the 2008 budget, we introduced a new Ontario senior homeowners' property tax grant to provide eligible senior homeowners with assistance with their property taxes. Over the next five years, we will be providing about \$1 billion through this grant, benefiting more than 600,000 seniors with low to moderate incomes who own their own homes.

More than 740,000 seniors are seeing an increase in tax relief with the enhancement of the Ontario energy and property tax credit, which provides seniors who own or rent their home with up to \$1,044 in relief for the sales tax on energy and for property taxes.

We're working in partnership with the Alzheimer's Society of Ontario to develop a new wandering prevention program to help quickly find seniors with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias when they are missing.

We have introduced the new Retirement Homes Act, which, for the first time in Ontario, provides legislative protections for Ontario seniors living in retirement homes. The act established the Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority, which will be responsible for enforcing this legislation. Last May, we introduced immediate measures to protect residents from abuse and neglect until the act comes into full force.

Our government has taken important steps to ensure seniors who cannot live at home enjoy access to the highest-quality long-term-care services by making key investments in long-term-care homes and increasing front-line staff. Other achievements in long-term care since 2003 include adding more than 9,100 new beds in long-term-care homes; increasing long-term-care funding by more than \$1.6 billion; and funding more than 7,000 new front-line staff in long-term-care homes.

Then there is the issue of pension reform and retirement income adequacy, both of which are key priorities for the McGuinty government. Ontario is playing a leading role in a national effort to review the state of the current retirement income system, its future sustainability and options that could strengthen the system for our seniors.

Our government recognized that pension legislation in Ontario was badly in need of updating. We worked hard to create the new Pension Benefits Amendment Act, 2010, and the Securing Pension Benefits Now and for the Future Act, 2010, which together marked the most significant reform of the Pension Benefits Act in more than 20 years. We have been working with the federal government and the other provinces and territories to explore options for expanding the Canada pension plan.

The McGuinty government is also supporting seniors through reforms to the rules for locked-in retirement savings accounts, giving seniors and other Ontarians more flexibility in accessing the funds in these accounts. We are making investments that help provide seniors with more opportunities to stay active, healthy and involved in their communities. This includes investing more than \$1.2 million to expand our elderly persons centres program, which supports seniors' centres across the province. Also, since 2003, we have invested more than \$6 million in elder abuse prevention, including providing \$900,000 annually to the Ontario Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse to better assist victims in communities across the province.

As you can see, Speaker, our government is making significant investments to ensure that Ontario seniors, like our parents, our grandparents and our elderly neighbours, have access to quality programs and services that help them live life safely, healthily and independently. The proposed healthy homes renovation tax credit will be the best example of this commitment.

I also want to take a little bit of time to talk about the economic benefit of this credit. As I mentioned earlier, this is going to be a significant boost for our renovation sector. It could result in the creation of about 10,500 jobs year by year, because seniors will be procuring the services of contractors who will be renovating homes because of this healthy homes renovation tax credit. It is also going to help suppliers, of course. You've got a lot of businesses, big and small, in our communities that sell products like accessible toilets and walk-in bathtubs or stairlifts. I have visited one such business in my community and was able to use, as a demonstration, one of these stairlifts. They are obviously a technology that has come a long way. That obviously assists these local businesses in our communities and will ensure that it's going to help an economic boost. It will help in the creation of new jobs.

I think a tax credit like this is also going to be helpful in curtailing the underground economy. That's an issue that you hear often from the renovation sector. By the way, the renovation and construction sector is very much supportive of this tax credit.

One of the key things in this legislation, as I mentioned earlier, is that in order for a senior or a relative to benefit from this tax credit, they would have to keep the receipt, the invoice, of the services that they have procured, whether they purchased something or they paid a contractor. Obviously, they have to declare that as part of the income tax return when they're filing it. The vendor, of course, also has to demonstrate on their end that they have provided that service. So there is more transparency; there is more visibility of the services that are provided. Of course, the vendor would have to pay taxes that are related to that as well.

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That helps undermine the underground economy, which is a huge scourge. We should do everything in our power to ensure that we're not participating personally in

the underground economy. Sometimes it's tempting to just pay somebody cash and not pay taxes, something that I refuse to do at every single opportunity. If somebody makes that offer to me, "I will cut your grass and just pay me cash," or "I'll clean the snow," I say, "No, I want to pay my sales tax." I, as a legislator, think that's something we all need to do. You send a clear message: "I need a receipt, I need an invoice, I will cut you a cheque." That's how you do it. I think we all have to play a role, and all of us have an opportunity every single day in our interactions to create that example, to show that we all benefit when we pay taxes, we all benefit when we keep the economy above ground, because those are the revenues that help pay for our health care and education systems.

This tax credit is going to really assist in that endeavour as well, because it really brings the renovation sector above ground. Something I've heard often, again and again, in my meetings with the renovation sector in my community in Ottawa is that they really favour a tax credit of this nature because it creates an incentive for people to engage in the activity, get a renovator and make their home more accessible. Also, it makes sure that everything is happening in a transparent fashion, where receipts and invoices are being exchanged, which is extremely important. So that's a very important aspect of it and something we should all be mindful of when we are supporting this legislation. And I hope that all members will be supporting this very important legislation, because it is going to create jobs, it is going to make sure our economy continues to go forward on a sustainable path, and we are helping to grow and create good-paying jobs in our local economies.

The other good thing about this type of tax credit is that the kinds of jobs that get created as a result of this tax credit are very local. They happen right in our communities. If you are from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek, as you are, Speaker, and a senior is taking advantage of this tax credit and getting a contractor to come and do the job, the person from your community who is doing it is most likely going to hire a person from your community to do the work. It's got that very direct impact on our local neighbourhoods. We won't be seeing these jobs going somewhere else. These jobs are taking place right in our communities, in our neighbourhoods.

I know something that all the members are very much concerned about: They want to make sure that if you're going to use public dollars and create tax credits, it is creating jobs all the time. This tax credit does that, and I really hope the NDP will be supporting it because of that. I do think they are supporting it, and I want to thank them for their very constructive dialogue on this bill.

I'm sure we are going to be hearing from them as well, but they were very constructive in the committee process that took place, coming up with some good suggestions, and their suggestions are included in this bill, Speaker. There are two amendments that are part of this revised bill as a result of the ideas that were put forward by the NDP, and I thank them very much for really using the minority government. What is best is working together.

It's unfortunate that the Conservatives did not participate in that exercise. In fact, they threw in quite a few obstacles. That committee was supposed to go two days with submissions and clause-by-clause, and I think it ended up going more than that. There were several sessions held, and that's unfortunate, but *c'est la vie*, as they say.

I do want to take this opportunity to thank a few people who helped me as I was going through some changes at home with a baby coming, etc. I want to thank all the members of the committee from all three parties for being understanding and assisting me and relieving me of my duties in the committee. I want to thank the member from Windsor West for sort of taking the lead on my behalf one day, the member from Oak Ridges-Markham for playing that role, and I believe the member from Etobicoke Centre was also there to assist me. Really, I think it's a great example of how we all come together to work with each other.

The committee is an important place. A lot of people came and spoke in support of this particular bill because they saw it as helping and providing support to the economy and jobs, because Ontarians deserve nothing less. Our seniors deserve to live in their own homes in an independent, dignified manner.

When we had public hearings, Speaker, on this bill, the stakeholders made it clear: They want to see this bill passed because it will help seniors. Let me quote a few of them now. I only have nine minutes to go, and I just want to make sure that some of the comments that were made by the stakeholders who came and spoke on this bill are on the record, because I think it's really important what they said, and their opinions really do matter in this instance.

Ms. Sandra Baldwin, who is the chair of the Ontario Home Builders' Association—we're talking about the impact for the renovation sector; it's really important to see what Ms. Baldwin had to say about this bill. She said, "The renovation tax credit will achieve the objective of allowing seniors to age in place. Maintaining health, independence and dignity is a very important objective which the legislation seeks to address. As our society ages, it's very important that policy-makers provide seniors the tools to allow them to live a full life." I wholeheartedly agree with Ms. Baldwin and the comments that she offered at the committee hearing on this.

Susan Eng, who was mentioned earlier, who is the vice-president of advocacy for CARP, which stands for the Canadian Association of Retired Persons, has a huge following. I think we all know Susan quite well. She does a really good job, works hard on behalf of retired persons, seniors across the province. She said the following: "Policies such as the healthy homes renovation tax credit would make it easier for seniors to remain at home." I think that's a really good endorsement to have from somebody like Ms. Eng.

Paul Golini, who is the chairman of the Building Industry and Land Development Association, had the following to say at the committee:

"Residential renovation is essential to our region's economic stability and prosperity because it creates jobs while improving the existing housing stock for years to come...."

"The entire residential construction industry is expected to bring in 165,800 jobs in new home construction and renovation in 2011, making it one of the largest employers in the region."

I think he speaks very significantly as to the impact this piece of legislation is going to have on our renovation sector and economic growth.

Jacquelyn Micallef from the Alzheimer Society of Ontario also spoke at the committee, and this is what Jacquelyn had to say: "Bill 2, the Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit Act, offers one type of support to facilitate a senior remaining safe and comfortable in their home or in that of their caregivers. This bill will also help caregivers to make their home more responsive to the needs of a person they are caring for by offsetting the cost of home renovations. This is established in the inclusion of the individual with a qualifying relation to the senior."

So she spoke, obviously, in support of relatives who may want to have a senior live with them being able to qualify for this tax credit. She thinks it's a good idea that we will not only just have the seniors qualify for this tax credit, but also a relative. For example, a child who wants their parents to live with them also qualifies.

We also had the Ontario Real Estate Association, Speaker, come to the committee. Patricia Verge, who, by the way is from Ottawa, spoke on behalf of OREA about this bill, and this is what Patricia had to say: "OREA is here today to speak in support of Bill 2. We commend the government for bringing it forward and encourage all parties to vote in favour of its passage." That's Patricia's request of all of us, that she hopes that all of us will come together and vote for the passage of this bill.

As we can see, we had people from all kinds of backgrounds—from the business community, from the not-for-profit sector, from advocacy groups who represent seniors—coming forward to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs and speaking in support of Bill 2, the Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit Act, because they see the positive benefits for seniors in terms of making it easier and accessible for them to live in their homes and also the impact it's going to have on our economy.

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Speaker, in closing, I want to quote the Premier as to what he has said and what he had in his mind that this tax credit was going to accomplish. He really concisely summarized our goals in introducing this tax credit, and he said, "We want families to have the peace of mind that comes with knowing that a mom can make it safety upstairs, or a dad can easily get to the kitchen. This credit would help our seniors live independently longer and it will also create jobs across the province to help build a stronger future for all Ontarians." I think that's a very good way of describing what this bill is going to achieve.

I'm really pleased that I had the opportunity to run on a platform that championed this idea. In the October 2011 election, I had many conversations in my community about this particular bill and seniors or loved ones wanting this to come into place. I'm really happy that I had the opportunity to work on this bill from the inception to now at third reading, and I'm really hopeful that the work we have all done together up to now in getting this bill through second reading and committee and now for third reading debate will result in its passage before the end of this session so that we will, as soon as this is passed, be able to allow our seniors to qualify for this tax credit. Like I said, this credit applies, if passed, retroactively from October 1, 2011, so if you have made changes, renovations, that make your home more accessible since October 1, 2011, please keep those invoices, please keep those receipts, because you will be able to use them to get this tax credit if the bill is passed into law.

I'm really hopeful that this will pass into law and that we will all continue to work together to make it easier for our seniors to live in their homes. I think this is a good-news story. We can go back to our communities, no matter which party we come from, and say, "You know what? This is available to you, and if you want to continue to live in your own home, if you want to make sure that you have the independence that you so much cherish and that you so much want to maintain, let's find a way to renovate your home and be able to apply for this tax credit."

You know, once it becomes law, when it becomes policy, it's not a Liberal policy; it's not a Conservative policy or NDP policy; it is the policy of the government of Ontario. We can all champion it, because what it's going to do is really help seniors in our communities, and it's going to help create jobs, local jobs in our communities, both worthy matters, not partisan in nature. Ideology has no meaning in this, because we all want to ensure that our seniors have the opportunity to live healthily, to live independently. Seniors don't want to live in long-term-care homes. Seniors don't want to live in nursing homes. Seniors don't want to go to hospitals. Seniors want to live in their homes, close to their families, and I think this bill really gives that opportunity and also gives this significant lift-up opportunity for our business community, local small businesses in our communities who work very hard in the renovation sector. It will allow them to work with seniors to be able to renovate homes and take advantage of the tax credit.

Thank you very much, Speaker. I don't want to use up all my time, because I know other members want to talk about this bill as well, so thank you for giving me the opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I am pleased to rise to respond to the debate that we are having today with regards to Bill 2, the Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit Act.

The fact of the matter is, I recall speaking to this bill last fall, and with all due respect to the member from St. Catharines as well as the member from Ottawa Centre, I have to share with you that I didn't support the bill then and I can't support the bill now, because the fact of the matter is, if the government is very serious about keeping seniors in their homes, they need to fess up and realize that the greatest hurdle, the number one thing that's prohibiting seniors from staying in their homes, is the rising cost of living, and the biggest culprit in that rising cost of living in homes is the cost of energy. They need to fess up, ladies and gentlemen. If seniors want to stay in their homes comfortably, they need heat and they need hydro.

Just earlier today and earlier this week, I referenced the fact that there are people in my riding who are calling our offices because their hydro is getting cut off. Is this the type of legacy that the Liberal government wants to leave? I don't think so, so we're encouraging them to do the right thing. Do the honourable thing and listen to what the PC caucus has been saying for months, and that is, if you're going to be serious about helping seniors, do the right thing, recognize that the Green Energy Act has failed and that we need to take a serious look at how we can help our seniors stay in their homes by bringing down the cost of their hydro and their heat. That is the right thing to do.

I found it interesting that the member for Ottawa Centre referenced jobs. They're short-term jobs. We need a real plan for job creation and affordability.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cindy Forster: I rise to just comment on the healthy homes renovation tax credit. I had the pleasure of sitting on the finance committee that actually dealt with this bill, which was my first—interesting and challenging. The bill itself makes a small contribution to the financial ability of some seniors to actually make improvements to their home that will keep them in their homes. We will be supporting the bill.

But there are at least 100,000 seniors in this province living in poverty who won't be able to access this bill at all because they won't have the money up front to do that up to \$10,000 in renovations. I think the important thing for me and for our party is that we were able to make amendments to the bill, some consumer protection amendments, amendments around the government having to provide lists of contractors, reputable contractors, because we all know that there are good contractors and there are bad contractors. If anybody watches Holmes on Homes, we see on that network all the time where bad contractors go in and do work and people are left holding the bag. We don't want that to happen to our most vulnerable seniors in this province.

We also were able to put in an amendment that actually will provide costing at the end of each year on what was actually spent out of that potential \$60 million, so that if the uptake is not enough, we will perhaps be able to move some of those funds to those lower-income

seniors to meet some of the needs that they need in their homes, perhaps like the program that is currently going on in Quebec which actually does upfront costs for about \$3,500 per senior.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal: It was a great opportunity this afternoon to listen to two substantive speeches, one delivered by my colleague the Minister of the Environment and the other one delivered by my colleague from Ottawa Centre. They were both—in terms of substance, the content was very detailed and the logic was superb to lay out the arguments in supporting Bill 2, which has been, Mr. Speaker, around for a while.

I want to bring this home to Peterborough for a moment. I always see my friend from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, a former Home Hardware owner—there are two of them in Peterborough, and I can see the people lined up, homeowners helping homeowners, to get in there to buy those materials, to take advantage of the healthy homes renovation tax credit. It's a real opportunity to generate activity locally, like the former program in Ottawa that was in place—and the member from Huron–Bruce, I believe.

This was an essential part of Canada's economic recovery program when they introduced that tax credit. We see this tax credit, in parallel fashion, a real opportunity to drive economic activity in Ontario, an opportunity for seniors of all incomes to renovate that bathtub, look after that shower, put in a stairlift, perhaps an elevator, to make their home easier for seniors. Members of that family as they age need accessibility to all parts of the home, and this very substantive piece of legislation will go a long, long way to make that happen.

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So I'm delighted that the Minister of the Environment, a former minister for seniors in Ontario—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

Mr. Jeff Leal: —and the member from Ottawa Centre—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

Mr. Jeff Leal: —are supporting this bill on third reading.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. I will remind the member from Peterborough that he was so wound up in his speech that he forgot to sit down. So when I say, "Thank you," that's your quote.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I duly apologize.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Certainly by now you'd think people in this Legislature, Speaker, would know that when the Speaker rises, the member sits.

I listened to both the Minister of the Environment and the member from Ottawa Centre. The thing that gets me about this bill—the member for Peterborough talks about it being significant. The problem is, it is so targeted. What about that senior whose windows are leaking, so the air is blowing through on those cold winter days?

Nothing for them. What about the one who needs a new furnace? Nothing for them. They need to stay in their homes too, and they don't need to be there freezing.

You know, the old federal program was a renovation credit for all. It spoke to the problems that people have in their homes and how they need this help. This is targeted to knock off one of the dominoes, hoping that the Liberals can garner support among those seniors at home who need some help with mobility issues or otherwise. It's that kind of targeted political thinking that we need to stop in this province. We need to have relief for all people out there who need it, not just for one targeted group.

When this thing is passed, and it will be passed because the third party and the Liberals are going to vote for it, it's going to result in such confusion. Yes, they've got this amendment in here about having a ministry hotline, so to speak, but you know where people are going to be calling? They're going to be calling their MPPs' offices, saying, "How come I'm not eligible?"

Oh, it was a big story in the newspaper: "Liberals to Help Seniors." Do you know what that is? It's misleading, Speaker, because this is targeted to a very narrow group of seniors.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Further debate? Oh, sorry. The member has two minutes to respond. The member from Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I want to thank the members from Huron–Bruce, Welland, Peterborough and Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for their remarks to my brief comments earlier about this bill.

I'm going to say that I'm really saddened to hear that the Conservatives are not going to be supporting this bill. Now, they claim that they've been talking to us; they've been telling us for the last two months what to do. Well, the only thing I recall hearing from them goes something like, "Ding, dong; ding, dong; ding, dong." That's what they have been doing for the last two months: delaying the debate when it comes to this piece of legislation or other important pieces of legislation like Bill 13, the Accepting Schools Act that will protect our children in schools from bullying.

This is an important bill. I don't know what the Conservatives are going to say when they go back to their own communities and face seniors who are going to benefit from this legislation: "I don't really care about you?" That's what I guess the Conservatives are going to be telling their seniors, that, "You know what? We don't care whether you continue to live at home or not." That is extremely sad, Speaker.

I applaud and appreciate the NDP working together, coming up with ideas, improving this bill, strengthening this bill through the committee process. Here we are at third reading, working together, ensuring that this becomes law and that seniors, going back to October 1, 2011, will be able to take advantage of this tax credit.

We, of course, have a lot more to do to ensure that seniors have the care and the services they need. Health care services are important. That's why the investments

we've been making in community care are very important.

I really urge the members of the Conservative Party to reconsider their views. They've made their point, whatever that may be, but this is the time for them to pull together and support this bill into law.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

I'd like to take this opportunity to remind members that musical chairs and not standing up when you're supposed to stand up is very confusing for the Speaker's chair. You know you have a two-minute response. If you don't stand up, I can't recognize you, and then other members stand up. So it gets very confusing in here. You know the rules. I don't want people playing games and the wrong people standing up when they shouldn't. Thank you.

Further debate. The member from Thornhill.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Thank you very much, Speaker. I want to say at the outset that I'll be sharing my time with my colleague the member from York-Simcoe.

The first thing I want to comment on is the fact that I listened with interest to my colleague from Ottawa Centre. While we don't agree on many things, I certainly understand the passion that he displays, I understand why he believes what he believes, but I have to say, with respect, that I don't believe what he believes. What I believe about this bill is that it's not really about seniors; it's not really about helping the trades; what it's really about is politics. It was, indeed, the very first bill that was tabled in this House when the new session started back in December. My colleagues on the other side want to say that it's a good bill, and I'm sure from their perspective they can sell that concept. It seems we've heard that we have support for their bill from the NDP, even though in discussions in committee we heard the same kinds of concerns expressed by the NDP that were expressed by my party. So I'll be rather interested to see whether the NDP actually votes with the Liberals or abstains. But that's another thing for another day.

The point is this: that helping seniors is an essential aspect for me in being a member of provincial Parliament. Helping people who are less capable is an important aspect for all of us. For me, that's both ends of the age scale. Seniors have less opportunity to go out and do for themselves, young children have less opportunity to do for themselves, so we have to provide help for them.

My colleague from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, who spoke quite eloquently in his two-minute contribution to the debate, said it very well when he talked about slicing the onion, peeling away layers. This is an incredibly thin bill, and I'll explore this more significantly as I go on in my comments. This is a very thin bill by the time it gets to the people it really purports to want to help.

Helping seniors is an issue of great importance for us in the Progressive Conservative Party; it is for us in our constituencies, as it is for all members in all parties. This is particularly apparent to me in Thornhill, where we

have an aging population, where we have many baby boomers approaching the age that qualifies them as seniors. I moved to Thornhill in 1983. I was a man in my thirties. That's when the expansion of Thornhill was encompassing people of my generation. So those people—

Mr. John Yakabuski: How old are you now?

Mr. Peter Shurman: You're asking me how old I am now? For me to know, for you to find out, but let's just say I'm qualified for old age supplement. The bottom line on this is that that entire area of Thornhill and many other areas are occupied by people who have been in homes for approximately 30 years, who want to stay in those homes and want the opportunity to do so. I think in most cases this bill doesn't afford them that opportunity.

All in this Legislature know that my party has the best track record for standing up for seniors. So whether we support this bill or not, there is no question that for time immemorial this party has stood for seniors. As I've mentioned in this House before, I myself have been responsible for introducing a property tax deferral bill for low-income seniors. I want to explore this a little bit more deeply because it's rather interesting. I introduced this bill twice. The bill was, unlike this bill, of no cost to the province of Ontario or to any jurisdiction whatsoever. All it did was say that if you wanted to stay in your house and you were a senior, very particularly a senior who in the recession period suffered and had a problem meeting all of the commitments that go with home ownership and home occupancy, you could defer the payment of your municipal property tax, at an interest cost that was commensurate with interest costs across the board, and that the province would support it unless and until you sold the house or you passed away.

I presented that bill a couple of years ago and it was shot down in flames for a variety of reasons. At the time, I made copious notes on what those reasons were. I went back to the legislative people and recast that bill, and I addressed every single one of those concerns. Further, Speaker, again in my quest to aid seniors to stay in their homes, I re-presented that bill with all of those exigencies covered, and I solicited the support of an NDP member at the time and of a Liberal member at the time. I'm going to tell you, Speaker: This bill failed as well, and that was the one and only time in the history of this Legislature that a bill sponsored by all three parties, including the governing party, failed. How could that be? If you had consensus amongst the three parties, how could that be? Well, that was really simple. They decided that it was going to fail. It was such a good bill that the Liberal government obviously couldn't stomach the idea of someone else coming up with the concept, and they voted it down twice before they reintroduced it as their own, as a campaign promise, in September 2011—speaking of which, I'm wondering when the Liberal Party is actually going to introduce this bill as government legislation, because I'll stand up and vote for it. I can tell you, imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. They can take anything they want. Just put that on the floor, because that's a good bill for seniors. It costs nothing, and it helps immensely.

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The bill that we're talking about today doesn't meet those criteria, and that's the issue. It's because of our party's support of seniors that I stand here today and I speak to Bill 2. As has been said, we are not supporting it. I want to make it clear that you can be pro-senior and not support this kind of—let's call it a Liberal loot bag. That's what this bill is. It's something that sold well at election time, so they brought it in as Bill 2, the first bill after the basic bill that starts the Legislature, and we discussed it briefly, and it went to committee. When we debated this bill in committee, the Liberal government showed absolutely no willingness to co-operate with the Ontario PCs or to consider recommendations that we actually had. Our party sought to provide what is needed for seniors, while keeping a close eye on the provincial budget, because living within their means and on a budget is something that the Liberal Party considers—let's call it a suggestion instead of a rule to live by. That's not the way we see it.

Seniors get it. Seniors get it, yet seniors are the ones who foot the cost of pretty well everything, more than most groups. They're the people who have made the largest contribution, just by dint of their age. They've been around long enough that they've paid the taxes, they've built lives, they've built homes, they've paid mortgages, they've brought up families, they've schooled their children, they've fed their children, and now they deserve a little bit of respect. This bill purports to give them that respect, but it's so thin in terms of who it serves that that's not possible. Perhaps this government should seek some input and some advice from the seniors themselves on how it's done, not from interest groups.

The bill, in third reading form, that we are debating today happens to include amendments from the NDP, and these amendments—this is very important—have not been costed out. This is a very important aspect of what we're considering today. During the course of study on this bill, when we were in committee, I requested, on behalf of the PC Party, some costing—what was this bill going to cost?—and I received three numbers. One was in arrears; in other words, what would it have cost to date? Given the fact that the budget year ended on March 31, what would it cost in the budget year that we have now entered? What would it cost in the ensuing year? I got three simple figures, but they were rather incoherent because they didn't connect to anything. I think they were figures that were best-guess estimates, because we don't know what the take-up on this is going to be. Let's just say that when I asked for the cost of this program during the committee discussions, the government provided three figures, but they provided an awful lot of rhetoric.

In addition, if you take a look at the NDP amendment, which calls for what essentially amounts to some kind of an information line, that uses an awful lot of verbiage to describe the drill-down process—where do I go to get the best estimate for what it is I want to have done on my house? Where do I find a contractor who is a reputable contractor? How do I qualify? Am I qualified?—all of

the things that my colleague from Renfrew suggested probably would come to MPP offices, to a great extent. That entire way of addressing this bill, which would probably be some form of government-operated call centre, will have a cost attached to it that we have not been provided figures on. And yet here we are in third reading and it winds up being a part of what will undoubtedly become a fairly convoluted and difficult bill to administer, with a cost figure that really isn't estimable at this point. Never was the actual or projected total cost outlined in committee or outlined before this chamber. "Don't worry," we were told. "It is covered out of allocations that exist." That means that money that had been allocated to other programs, perhaps in other ministries, would be transferred and there would be, we were told, no new net cost to the province.

You could get off on an entire tangential debate here and say "no new additional cost" to a province that's going into deficit this year to the tune of \$15 billion, when our entire push for the past six months has been about controlling spending—that's an entirely different aspect of this and one that we could well consider, because if you have money to allocate to this, better you allocate the money to pay down a deficit.

In the midst of a financial crisis, how can the Liberal government expect any responsible members to vote for a bill without providing information on how much it will cost to implement? This seems—to me, anyway—to be a new policy of the Liberal government that we could charitably describe as, "Trust me. Trust me. It will be okay. We'll get it done." I'm debating a bill today that, obviously, with the Liberal vote added to the NDP vote, is going to result in passage. It will be through third reading sometime next week, or maybe when we come back after the one-week hiatus and before the House rises. And it's going to cost some amount of money to administer and it's going to cost some amount of money in the tax credits, but we don't know what that amount is.

So here we are. Without knowing what the true costs are, how can this government even hope to prevent the cost from ballooning to unaffordable levels? How? The government has not told anyone where the money for this program actually comes from, other than that business of being moved from other ministries and other allocations. I recommended, to the repugnance of the Liberal committee members, to hold back the payment, the bonus pay, for parliamentary assistants. I said, "You know, parliamentary assistants get an additional \$16,000 per year for being parliamentary assistants," and, to my knowledge, absolutely everybody on that side who is not a minister of the crown is a parliamentary assistant, save and except for one. That means everybody over there who's not a minister gets an additional \$16,000 for that work. I said, "If you can't tell me where the allocation for this bill comes from, maybe I'd better move a motion that says that until we find that out, we'd better take away the parliamentary assistant pay." The motion unfortunately failed, but I thought it was a pretty good idea at the time.

I might say, I'm no parliamentary assistant, so I get your basic MPP pay, and by the way, it's been frozen for

four years. As I said the other day, no complaint, but I think it's important that people out there know that there is an entire raft of Liberal people on the other side who get \$16,000—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member is kind of really wearing this segment of his speech out, and he knows that it's not really dealing with the issue by talking about that particular item. So can we not go there? Thank you.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I accept what you say, Speaker, and I take your point. I'll simply say that by going far afield, I was trying to call attention to the fact that there is money that is spent in different ways and we could more easily and in a better way direct this to the bill.

If you look beneath the surface of the bill to focus directly on the bill, and by that I mean look beyond the catchy title of the bill, the healthy homes tax credit, you'll see that this bill, like almost any other introduced by the Liberal government—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke was warned earlier in the afternoon. That was kind of like, "Don't do it again." He went out and came back. That doesn't mean that that penalty still isn't in effect.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, I didn't know that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Well, now you know. Thank you very much, and I'm sure we won't be hearing much from you. Thank you.

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Mr. Peter Shurman: Speaker, thank you.

Again, if you look beneath the surface of the bill, and I'm talking about beyond the scope of healthy homes tax credit, which is yet another Liberal attempt to make a bill sound palatable, you see that the bill, like almost any other introduced by this government, is essentially empty. Now, many of the Liberal members will try to argue about what the bill's intent is. "We want to help seniors," is what they'll say. We do, too, but let me say, not in the same way.

News for you: Intent is not enough. The program has to actually deliver. It doesn't matter what the intent is. Some of the taunts we had in committee were, "You don't want to help seniors." That's not true. It's patently untrue. We want to help seniors, but we want to be effective in that. We want to be effective in everything we do in this Legislature, and Bill 2 does not pass the test on that.

We all know there's a saying that the road to somewhere is paved with good intentions. That addresses the idea of intent. We've had over eight years of Liberal intentions, and look where Ontario has wound up. So, intent: not too much. Forty per cent of this country's population is in Ontario, and we're at the end of the line on employment insurance benefits. We're last.

Let's now delve beneath the surface of the bill. Let's talk about the bill itself. Let's consider how much of an impact, if any, Bill 2 could actually have on Ontario families and seniors as a mechanism to stimulate the economy.

First of all, only seniors—65 plus is the definition—would qualify for the tax credit proposed by the bill itself, which equals about 13% of Ontario's population. That's about 1.8 million people. So the broad base of seniors is 1.8 million people. Of all the people living in Ontario, the tax credit could potentially apply to only 13%. The median senior income in Ontario, meaning that most seniors living in Ontario are in this category, is \$25,000 per individual and \$45,000 per couple. That translates into approximately \$2,000 to \$3,700 of income per month, depending on whether you're a single senior or a senior couple.

In order to qualify for the maximum tax credit of \$1,500—15% of the maximum expenditure of \$10,000—a senior has to actually spend that \$10,000, so a senior has to actually have that \$10,000. When the senior spends that \$10,000, he or she or the couple is actually out of pocket \$8,500.

You've got to ask yourself again, if you're going to that thin edge of the wedge, after you look at all seniors being a global universe of 1.8 million and you cut through the first layer—that layer is people who can afford any amount of spending, much less an amount like \$10,000. It's a substantial sum of money, nearly an unreachable sum of money for many, especially given the fact that savings have taken such a serious hit in the past few years and the nest egg that provided the cash flow for many seniors has been very seriously diminished, it's probably safe to say, for no segment of the population more so than that segment, because if you were 70 years old and it was 2008-09 and you had to live, your income from the nest egg was zip, zero, nada, nothing, and so you dipped into the principal, and what you've been left with now—we're in 2012—is a diminished principal yielding a diminished income.

Not just any renovations qualify. Now we get to another thin edge. Only renovations that the Liberal government has decided are acceptable, or may decide through regulation are acceptable.

So a senior living alone in the province of Ontario has to spend nearly half of his or her annual income to get back \$1,500 as a tax credit. My one-line rejoinder to that is: Who are you guys kidding? Where's the take-up on this? How many seniors do you know who can put up nearly half their annual income for a renovation? Not very many. So the number of people this program would, in reality, apply to shrinks again by a significant number. It begins with 1.8 million, but that drops based on income and drops based on marital status. As if that weren't enough, seniors receiving ODSP benefits are excluded from qualifying for the tax credit, and that shrinks the pool even further.

Then your renovations have to meet specific criteria—we haven't gone there yet—which means that, of those who could afford to renovate their homes, an even smaller fraction of those would get the refund. Do you get the idea?

My friend from Renfrew spoke a couple of moments ago—that's you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: That's me.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I can't say your name. But my friend the member from Renfrew talked about the fact that there are seniors who have deficiencies in their homes that they want to stay in. Homes get old, just like people do. So if you're paying for energy and you don't have windows that keep the cold out, if you're paying for electricity when the rates continue to go up higher and higher, if you've got a furnace that isn't working and it absolutely is crying out for replacement—and that's before you get to any of the aesthetics—you don't qualify. You only qualify if you have an infirmity that means that you have to spend money that maybe you have and maybe you don't have, that gets you up the stairs on one of those lifts, or a means to enter a bath appliance in a way such that you don't have to lift your legs, those kinds of things.

You're cutting away and cutting away, and peeling the onion and peeling the onion. All you've got is a bud at the end. It's no longer a whole onion. That's the problem.

The question I have is: Who actually benefits from the program?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: People who need those things.

Mr. Peter Shurman: No, it's not true. It certainly doesn't help those people who need it most.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Speaker would like them to go through the Chair and not have cross-dialogue.

The member from Renfrew: The comedy is getting a little worn out with the silent routine. Please don't do that. Don't make a mockery of the Chair. Thank you.

Continue.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Thank you, Speaker.

The people who are financially well off and can put up \$10,000 to renovate their homes don't have to wait for a government cheque or a tax credit. They'd do the renovation in any event. That's what they'd do. Meanwhile, those who need the help who cannot afford the renovations, who don't have the cash to do what they need to do, are still left sitting in the dust.

This bill, at the end of the day, as I started out saying about 20 minutes ago, is basically a nasty piece of business because it addresses seniors and proceeds to deny the majority of seniors. That's why I say, and that's why my party says, that this is a nasty piece of business, that this is a political bill. Most of what we hear from the other side is about politics.

Seniors are also people who, more often than most—and I know we hear statistics such as, the amount of medical care that you need at the end of your life is 80% in the last 20% of the years that you live. That medical care extends, for example, to air ambulances like Ornge.

We've been thwarted by that party over there on the issue of a select committee to investigate Ornge, and so at this point, I have to say, because of that, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Mr. Shurman has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those against will say "nay."

I believe the nays have it.

This will be a 30-minute bell. Call in the members.

The division bells rang from 1728 to 1758.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Mr. Shurman has moved adjournment of the debate. All those in favour of the motion will please stand to be counted by the clerks' table.

All those opposed, please stand.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 19; the nays are 29.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I declare the motion failed.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I'll now move into a late show. Thank you very much.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

TOURISM

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Kenora-Rainy River has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport concerning Ontario tourism information centres. The member from Kenora-Rainy River has five minutes.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: On May 3, I asked the minister a very straightforward question regarding the closure of three travel information centres in my riding. Speaker, that question was not answered.

Since the time when these closures were announced, without consultation and without notice, I have done everything in my power to obtain answers from the minister about the reasons for this decision. At first, the minister said it was to focus on online marketing and travel applications for phones. I pointed out that my region does not have the infrastructure in place to market in such a way. Then the minister said it was about the numbers. I inquired about the numbers, and I was told that they were still being compiled, which struck me as a little strange because you generally need the numbers to make a decision that's based upon the numbers. I asked the minister, then, if this was a politically motivated decision. He got very angry at that insinuation, yet when I finally received the numbers, they didn't add up.

Speaker, there were three travel information centres in my riding of Kenora-Rainy River. They were at Fort Frances, Kenora and Rainy River. Tourism is not a secondary or complementary industry in my region; in many cases, it is "the" industry.

Following the collapse of the forest industry, communities across the region made the decision to focus on tourism, and they have done an outstanding job. Despite the fact that they've been battling a government that simply does not understand that our markets are different than those in southern Ontario, our industry did press

forward. They pushed forward despite the closure of the spring bear hunt. They pushed forward despite having to compete with markets in Manitoba and northern Minnesota that do not have the HST. Now they're expected to move forward without travel information centres.

This government did not give any notice of the decision; it just went and did it. Municipalities that rely heavily on tourism are now scrambling to figure out just what to do. They were not given the time to look at other options, including taking over the centres. They were not given the respect of advance notice from this ministry. They can't even get the minister to respond to their letters or their emails. This is an insult, and this is totally unacceptable.

Speaker, the Minister of Tourism is supposed to facilitate growth in this industry, not drive another nail in the coffin. The minister is supposed to uphold his duties in a manner that is not political but is for the betterment of the province.

The minister maintains that this was not a political move, yet the seasonal centre in Pigeon River remains open, despite having many fewer visits than in Kenora, and Kenora is being closed.

I'm not advocating for the closure of any centres. I believe they send an important, welcoming message to all tourists in all communities, and at a minimal cost to the government's budget.

My point has been clear: If this is not a politically motivated decision, then the minister has a duty and an obligation to tourist operators in my riding and across the province to outline his plan—a plan that does not rely on technologies that are simply not in place. If the minister is straightforward in saying that this decision is about the numbers, then it stands to reason that the travel information centre in Pigeon River will close. If that is the case, the minister is doing the business community in Thunder Bay and across the entire north a disservice by not announcing it. If there are other centres that are set to close, this minister is doing those communities a disservice as well.

Speaker, I ask once again: Will the minister please explain how these decisions were made? The hard-working people of our province's tourism sector deserve to know.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Parliamentary assistant, the member from Niagara Falls.

Mr. Kim Craitor: I'm pleased to do a late show. Mr. Speaker, I have some comments that I will make on behalf of the minister.

I'm pleased to rise in the House to discuss the Ontario travel information centres, affectionately known as OTICs.

This government has presented a budget to put Ontario on track to tackle the deficit while continuing to provide quality services for Ontarians. We're moving forward to achieve sustainable services, and we continue to provide sound investments. Government services need to keep pace with changing demands and with the expectations of the public.

Over the past 10 years, the one year-round OTIC in Fort Frances and the seasonal OTICs in Kenora and Rainy River, like the four that are closing in southern Ontario, including one in my own riding of Fort Erie, have shown an average decline in visitation of more than 50%. I actually know that because in my riding of Fort Erie, I'd stop there many times to see the one person who worked at our travel centre. We'd have conversations about how many people were coming into that location, so I'm quite familiar with that.

These declines are telling us that these services are no longer the primary source of travel information. Travellers are turning increasingly to using the Internet, their GPS, and planning their trips well ahead of time, knowing where they're going, what they want to see and going in those directions.

In fact, in 2010, over four times more travellers used the Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership Corp. website to make travel plans than those who visited a travel information centre.

The Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport and our agency, the Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership Corp., stand by the decision today, as we did when the decision was made. We have taken a hard look at the way in which we deliver services to Ontarians, and as part of our plan we are realigning our tourism marketing services by focusing on online travel marketing activities.

Ontario is stepping up its 24/7 electronic- and Internet-based travel marketing presence to meet consumers' travel research and booking preferences. This will allow us to meet consumers' travel research preferences through major redevelopment of Ontario's tourism information website, our call centre and our brochure distribution service.

We're also introducing a tourism presence in the Ministry of Transportation's 23 new, high-traffic highway service centres.

We will continue to operate our travel information call centre so that people may dial a toll-free number and speak directly with a travel counsellor.

This transformation will result in savings of \$300,000 this fiscal year and \$1.5 million annually thereafter.

We're committed to ensuring Ontario's tourism competitiveness by making sound investments.

The Pigeon River OTIC continues to serve an important American market and is located at the border on a main highway for travellers from Duluth, Minnesota.

Although the OTIC in Kenora has closed, the Lake of the Woods Discovery Centre opened in the summer of 2011. Located in Norman Park, the centre is Kenora's primary destination for visitor information services. This newly operated facility provides a unique interactive experience for discovering Kenora and the Lake of the Woods region. The Ontario government was extremely pleased to support this project.

We continue to invest in northern tourism initiatives to build a stronger, more competitive tourist industry. Our support includes \$68 million since 2003 to support tourism initiatives in the north, including Kenora, Rainy River and Fort Frances; over \$6 million since 2007 to

support 130 events in northern Ontario through Celebrate Ontario; \$5 million each year from the OTMPC for the northern Ontario marketing budget since 2003; and \$5 million annually to the new Northern Regional Tourism Organization 13 since 2010.

These investments are seeing results. In 2001, the average hotel occupancy rate in northwestern Ontario was up compared to the previous year.

We're committed to ensuring Ontario's tourism competitiveness by making sound investments. We are

meeting the expectations of travellers by focusing our efforts on enhanced Internet-based services.

We will continue to work with our partners in northern Ontario to build a stronger, more competitive industry for tourism now and into the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. This House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1809.

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Jane McKenna
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 40th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 40^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
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Thursday 10 May 2012

Jeudi 10 mai 2012



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 10 May 2012

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 10 mai 2012

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ATTRACTING INVESTMENT AND CREATING JOBS ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 VISANT À ATTIRER LES INVESTISSEMENTS ET À CRÉER DES EMPLOIS

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 2, 2012, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 11, An Act respecting the continuation and establishment of development funds in order to promote regional economic development in eastern and southwestern Ontario / Projet de loi 11, Loi concernant la prorogation et la création de fonds de développement pour promouvoir le développement économique régional dans l'Est et le Sud-Ouest de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Thank you very much, Speaker. It's always nice to arrive here early in the morning and speak for an hour on such an important issue. I'm proud to rise on behalf of the PC caucus, our party, to offer feedback and comments on Bill 11.

I'm also speaking to this bill as a third-generation small business owner from southwestern Ontario. I can assure you that southwestern Ontario business people aren't looking for grants. I would say with certainty that most business people in southwestern Ontario, eastern Ontario and across the province are really concerned about affordable hydro more than anything right now. I'll speak a little bit later about a business in my riding—they employ 75 hard-working people in southwestern Ontario—that announced last week that they're closing their retail operation. Hydro is running between \$18,000 and \$20,000 a month, and three years ago it was about half of that.

With the recent news of Ontario's credit rating being downgraded from AA1 to AA2, I, along with the rest of Ontario, am extremely disappointed and concerned by the downgrade. For several weeks, all that we have heard from the party opposite, the government, is that the proposed budget is good for Ontario and that this budget will bring Ontario back to prosperity. Ontario has once again

been tricked by Dwight Duncan, Dalton McGuinty and the government. It took less than a week for credit agencies to state their objections to the proposed budget. The response to the budget that we have seen from credit agencies just goes to show how flawed this government's budget really is. The truth is that the budget is not good for Ontario, and everyone except the Liberal government is taking note of that. The government's budget has failed, and no matter how many times the finance minister says the budget is just what Ontario needs, it will not change the reality that Ontario is headed towards economic failure.

Our province was once the economic engine of Canada. Now, the debt in this province is so high that its credit scores have been downgraded. We have said over and over again, many times, that the Liberal government must stop spending. The province's bank account is empty and now the province's credit score has been downgraded. It's unacceptable. Dalton McGuinty has been trusted with the finances of the people of Ontario—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): May I remind the member that we don't refer to people's names; we refer to their title or their riding. This is the second time you have done it in the last couple of minutes, so whoever is your speechwriter—you might want to go through your notes to make sure you're correct.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Thank you, Speaker.

All the Premier has done for the last nine years is spend. If nothing is done to address the government's spending, Ontario's destination is no longer prosperity. Ontario, as Don Drummond has noted, is on the road to a \$30-billion deficit. Ontario's credit downgrade by Moody's Investors Service is a major blow to Ontario and to Canada, I would say. It raises the spectre of a spike in borrowing costs that could derail what's left of this budget and divert precious dollars from health care and education into the pockets of international investors. I'm not comfortable padding the pockets of international investors with taxpayer dollars.

There seems to be a lack of understanding regarding the reality of Ontario. The Liberal government is not even taking a credit downgrade seriously. I would also note the finance minister's inappropriate attempt to joke about the situation when it was announced. The finance minister seems to have a delusional sense of optimism that is not rooted in economic reality. Of course, Speaker, I'm making reference to the third credit rating report that was released a few weeks ago by DBRS, where the finance minister said that Ontario is "two out of three—that's better than Ted Williams." The finance minister

and the Premier need someone to sit down with them and explain to them this is no laughing matter.

The entire PC caucus, along with our leader, Tim Hudak, have tried to tell the Liberal government over and over again, and they just don't get it. They're listening to no one. Even the credit agencies don't seem to be taken seriously by the Premier or the Minister of Finance. Let me read from its statement, as reported recently in the *Globe and Mail*: "Limiting debt growth will be very challenging and require a 'significant pickup in fiscal resolve.'"

If only this government had listened to the Auditor General, to their own hand-picked economist, Don Drummond, to the Conference Board of Canada, to Moody's last December, and of course to the PC caucus, we would have stood here celebrating a continued stable credit rating. Instead, all Ontarians should be concerned about what could happen next. An erosion of Ontario's credit rating will almost certainly drive up borrowing costs for the province.

A mere 1% increase in borrowing costs would cost the Ontario treasury \$500 million. Of course, that's enough to buy 250,000 MRI exams. I know that there are many people across Ontario waiting for an MRI exam, and because of the Premier and the finance minister's poor fiscal management, the people in Ontario who need MRIs desperately will continue to have to wait. In short, it's time for new ideas, and a new team with the courage to make them a reality. We've got some tough decisions to make, but time is running out. The longer we wait, the larger our debt becomes.

Speaker, I am frustrated. Bill 11 is proposing more government spending. I don't understand why we're still here in this House debating about more spending. Maybe the Premier knows something we don't know. Clearly, the Liberal caucus has not been reading the newspapers. Spending must be addressed. Tough decisions have to be made. If you keep ignoring the bills, they simply keep going up.

Since being elected, I have spoken with members of the community, business and government leaders throughout Lambton-Kent-Middlesex and throughout the province. I meet regularly with small businesses, entrepreneurs, major corporations, large, small and medium-size employers. I meet with education and development heads and I meet with regular, everyday people, whether they're farmers, retirees, shift workers or the unemployed.

I meet with people of all political stripes, even Liberals and people who support the third party, and of course I meet with many Conservatives, and people of all political stripes are telling me constantly that things in Ontario have to change. They told me that Ontario needs to take a new course and needs to go in a completely different direction. Over the past couple of months, the people have told me that they don't want more of the same and that they don't want to keep going down the same path, down the same road that we are currently heading. I don't know what we have to do to convince the government of this. We keep telling them that they

need to address spending and Ontario needs to change. It seems that the Liberal government is asleep at the wheel here, Speaker.

0910

It is a great privilege for me to speak so early here today, as I said in my opening, and to clearly state to this government some of the many flaws with its current approach, including this very bill, Bill 11.

With everything I've heard since the budget from the community, from locally elected officials and municipal government, indeed from the government's own consultant, Don Drummond, and now from the credit agencies, I'm more certain than ever that things need to change and that it is time to adopt some of the straightforward and common sense principles being put forward by the Ontario PC caucus and by our leader, Tim Hudak.

Since 2003, this government tells us they have worked closely with the business community and regional economic development partners to attract new development and investment, and to create jobs for Ontario families. The government has also told the people of Ontario that they have partnered with companies that are making investments in Ontario and creating jobs.

As you will know, under the current Liberal government, Ontario has lost over 300,000 well-paying manufacturing jobs. At one point, we were losing 100 jobs per hour in Ontario—some pretty scary stuff. Over 550,000 Ontario men and women remain out of work. This, of course, is contributing to Ontario's jobless rate, which has remained well above the national average for well over five years. Those are some heavy numbers here, first thing in the morning, so let me distill it down for my friends on the government side.

For over five years now, Ontario's jobless rate has remained above the national average for the entire country, Speaker, for all of Canada. That's right. The current government has especially been failing the people of Ontario who are looking for work for well over five years. Worse than average: That's nothing to be proud of.

Unfortunately, I constantly see examples of unemployment in my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. As you know, Speaker, southwestern Ontario and my riding have been especially hard hit with the downturn in the manufacturing sector. My constituents are coming to me every day asking why the Liberal government is doing nothing to repair the economy and nothing to help turn things around and help them, hard-working men and women, get back to work. Unfortunately, this is not an overstatement.

Let's go back just over the past several months, perhaps to the October 6, 2011, election. Since then, this government, the Liberal government, has not done one thing—nothing. They haven't brought forward any ideas on how to create meaningful jobs in my riding, in southwestern Ontario, eastern Ontario or throughout the province. Now the people of Ontario are going to have to pay increased interest rates on the province's debt because this Premier, this government, didn't listen. But who are

we kidding? He isn't paying for it, so he clearly isn't concerned with it.

I come from a small business background, Speaker, and I learned very young from working in the family business that you can't spend your way to prosperity. It just doesn't work. We have seen unprecedented government spending from the current government, and we have also seen Ontario's economy struggle like never before. The Liberal government has proven time and time again that their spending system does not work.

Since the election, we have seen a troubling trend, which is a continued flow of companies closing shop and those good jobs leaving Ontario. As I said early on, in my riding last week, 75 jobs were lost as a retail store announced that it was closing. On another note, a couple of months ago, a business in my riding, another retail operation that employs 65 people, told me that their hydro bill is up \$8,000 year over year. These added costs are decimating the province. Hydro is the number one issue. In my portfolio of economic development, I hear, time and time again, that this is by far the number one concern businesses are faced with in the province. Why is this government not taking responsibility for the loss of these jobs?

Mr. Speaker, I think the Liberal government is confused. I think the Liberal government is limping from one crisis to the next without any real plan, without any clue as to how to solve the problems facing our economy, the problems their government has caused and even worsened with their lack of decisive action.

It is time that the Premier took responsibility for this province's job losses. This Premier needs to fix the disaster that he himself has created. For a long time now, the Ontario PC caucus and our leader have been fighting to stop the damage and stop the madness of the Liberal government. We've been fighting to stop the chaos resulting from almost nine years of his unsustainable spending increase after spending increase—eight years of rapid growth in the size of government and eight years of structural deficits compounding on themselves.

Indeed, the last eight or nine years has brought skyrocketing increases in the government's overall expenditures. I'm sure I don't need to tell you, but did you know that our spending is up over \$20 billion since the recession? Speaker: \$20 billion. Coming, again, from a family business, it is my experience that things should work opposite of that. That is, when money gets tight, spending decreases and savings must be found, but apparently not so for this government.

The problem, of course, is that someone needs to pay for all of this spending, and that someone is you and me, Speaker, and the hard-working families across the province of Ontario, who are struggling to make ends meet. It's the taxpayers, the small businesses, the farmers, the truck drivers, the store owners and factory workers who have to pay for this Premier's reckless spending spree.

However, we also know that their incomes haven't kept pace with the rapid increase in spending coming from this government. Ontario incomes and incomes for

folks in my riding have basically stagnated since this government came to office way back in 2003. While public sector salaries have grown, private sector salaries have remained stagnant. Government spending is at an all-time high, as is Ontario's debt. The current government spending plan is not working for Ontario. We have seen Ontario's economy steadily declining over the last eight years. Coinciding with this decline has been a constant increase in government spending.

I think that the record speaks for itself: The spending plan that this government insists on is not working: Nine years and only negative results is enough evidence for Ontario. The process and the priorities must change. While Ontario's incomes have remained the same, the cost of government has grown substantially and enormously, to the point that the Premier had to call in outside help to come in and review the books and help determine where things went off the tracks.

Again, let's remember back just seven months ago to the election campaign in the lead-up to the October 6 election, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure you can remember, as I can, when this Premier and this government boasted of being a steady hand in times of economic uncertainty. When the Premier asked the Ontario public to trust him once again—and the public had their day and responded by yanking the Liberal mandate and electing a stronger opposition and sending a minority government back to Toronto—since that day, we have had report after report rejecting the current path and rejecting the current government.

Think back just over the past number of months: We've had the damning report from the Auditor General—the independent officer of this House—a non-partisan report that slammed this government in so many areas for mismanagement and waste.

Interjection.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Speaker, I must pause just for a second to say that I must be touching a nerve on the other side of the House this morning. I know hearing reality first thing in the morning is a painful exercise, especially when Ontario is facing a \$30-billion deficit and a debt that possibly could be heading toward \$411 billion.

The downgrade of Ontario's credit could be just the tip of the iceberg if this government doesn't change direction. The simple fact is that we would not be in the situation we are in, with high unemployment, ridiculous energy prices, skyrocketing debt and an uncontrollable deficit, if it were not for the Liberal government, this government's total mismanagement of Ontario's economy. We wouldn't be here if it weren't for this government's addiction to spending, their uncontrollable spending.

The Drummond report is a scathing report card on our province's well-being, our current direction in leadership, and it's an eye-opener that we need to start doing business differently; that this government and future governments need to start doing business differently. We simply cannot continue down this current path. We cannot proceed with the same failed approaches like Bill 11,

which is another \$160 million in spending at a time when our deficit is a billion dollars higher than it was last year.

Don Drummond clearly states that it is time for new ideas and new approaches to how our government operates. His approximately 700 pages are a road map. But the document also provides proof of a very serious spending crisis, a crisis far worse than we imagined, far worse than we ever thought and certainly worse than this Premier has ever acknowledged. Now the credit agencies, as I've said a few times, are telling us that the spending must stop, because Ontario's credit has been downgraded.

0920

I am pleased to urge and challenge this government to do what everyone is saying: Take the tough medicine that the doctor has prescribed and start making changes to the way you run your government and this province. But you know what, Mr. Speaker? Nothing I've seen with this government since the election gives me hope that they will, or even can, act upon certain recommendations. It's no secret: Ontarians have very little faith in this government to cut spending and reduce the overall size and cost of government—it's in the Liberals' DNA.

What we need is an immediate action plan from this government to clean up the mess, the mess that they themselves created, the mess that they themselves have allowed to grow faster, grow untamed and grow unmanned, but I'm sure that's not what we're going to get.

We're here today debating Bill 11, part of the same tired and washed-up approach that got us into this problem in the first place. Our party and our leader understand what Ontario needs to get back on the road to recovery. Indeed, I've called on this Premier to throw a quarantine around Ontario's economic purse. That's right: no more new spending promises, no new uncoded and one-off spending and no more growth in the size and cost of government. So, here we are with Bill 11, and instead of trying to protect the jobs we currently have, the Liberal government is using taxpayers' dollars to create a new stimulus program, more corporate handouts and a pork project known as the southwestern development fund.

Here's the funny thing, Speaker: For all of the recommendations and warnings that the province has been receiving, they're still not listening. Nobody in this government is listening. Indeed, Don Drummond, like Roger Martin before him, has stated that it's time to get Ontario out of the corporate subsidy business and out of the business of giving unnecessary subsidies to all businesses.

Bill 11 is a \$160-million temporary band-aid approach to job creation that will not create long-term economic growth. Why is the government trying to create new jobs with taxpayer dollars while allowing current full-time jobs to leave our province? It makes no sense.

This government is currently handing out \$3.5 billion per year in corporate subsidies—\$3.5 billion was in this year's budget. It's no way to create jobs, and it just keeps adding to the deficit and to the debt. We have a \$16-billion deficit. As I said a few minutes ago, that's \$1 billion higher than it was last year. This is irresponsible, it's reckless and it's not sustainable. It has to stop. This out-of-control spending is troubling and upsetting.

What is more troubling is that not only does the current government do nothing to keep current jobs in Ontario, but they do nothing, period, when it comes to job creation. They simply spend money blindly and aimlessly—just spend, spend, spend. Speaker, consider this: Under this government, some programs are actually handing out \$300,000 per job. I'm not sure if the members on the opposite side of the House actually are reviewing the corporate subsidies from the Ministry of Economic Development and Innovation, but there's one company, for example, that received \$1.5 million to create five jobs. There are many, many examples of companies getting \$300,000 per job. That's not sound economic policy.

An interesting fact is that despite difficult economic circumstances, Ontario has seen some modest growth in the construction industry. I recently met with the CFIB and the WSIB to discuss the increasing regulation that the construction industry is experiencing. The funny thing is that this government's solution to growth seems to be to increase regulation, at least according to these industry leaders.

On January 1, Bill 119 came into effect, a bill that requires companies who employ construction workers to pay for the mandatory insurance that can only be done through the WSIB. On average, this change alone will cost each business an additional \$11,000 per year in insurance premiums. That's a tax grab, Speaker, and of course, we know that this government loves to tax and spend. Prior to Bill 119, construction companies were free to get private insurance that often included more comprehensive coverage at a better price than the WSIB is providing. This new regulation will cost one of the few growing industries in Ontario more money. It's a tax on an industry that has actually weathered the storm fairly well.

As a result, employers will have to make cuts in order to accommodate this new expense, cuts that will come in the form, sadly, of lost jobs—another example of the Liberal government's job creation program. It seems to always have an adverse effect on job creation.

Once again, why is the Ontario government increasing regulation on one of the few growing industries in the province? It doesn't make any sense, and it shows a government that is again limping from one problem to the next. Is the goal to have fewer jobs and to stop economic growth? I know that a lot of business people in the province ask me that, with a puzzled look on their faces. It seems that this Premier's government thinks as much. At least, that is where they're leading us to. These regulations are costing Ontario workers their jobs. Why is the Liberal government increasing taxes on one of the few growing industries in Ontario, on top of more regulations?

I was recently contacted by a constituent who was voicing his concern about regulations and the crippling effect they were having on his business. Brian MacKenzie, who is the operations manager at McRobert Fuels, is currently frustrated with the unnecessary red tape in Ontario. His plant's operations have been tempor-

arily shut down because the Ontario government is not certifying enough engineers to perform routine safety checks at the plant—safety checks that this government—

Interjections.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: No—safety checks that this government actually requires. He is also frustrated because, according to industry regulations, there are several people who must perform these safety checks separately from others. Why can't one certified individual perform these checks? Why is the current Liberal government not ensuring that there are enough certified engineers to perform these routine checks or, better yet, just having one person do them? Instead of blowing money on another wasteful bureaucracy, we have a company that has to shut down operations, we have people who want to work and we have people in Ontario who want to be certified. Why is nothing being done to streamline regulations and eliminate red tape so that the people of Ontario can get back to work?

It would seem that the McGuinty government is so out of touch, so out to lunch, and they just don't get it. That's right; it's still early morning, but the Liberals are already out to lunch, and of course the people stuck paying the tab are the taxpayers in my riding of Lambton—Kent—Middlesex and throughout the entire province of Ontario.

The solution for Ontario's job crisis is not more spending and more regulations. It is certainly not passing Bill 11 here today, the government's \$160-million bill. Current overregulation and government spending is crippling Ontario's economy and destroying jobs. More spending in the form of this bill will only add to the problem and compound the disaster we are currently facing. Under Dalton McGuinty, Ontario's debt has doubled. It may hit \$400 billion—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Again, I remind the member we don't refer to members of the House by their first name or last name. I'd ask you to stick to titles or a riding.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Thank you again, Speaker, for the friendly reminder.

Under this government, it's worth repeating again that Ontario's debt has doubled and will hit \$411 billion in five years, by 2017, if left unchecked. Our deficit will be a crippling \$30 billion in those same five years.

There are no more questions. The report card is in. This Premier and this government have a spending problem and, for some reason, the Liberals keep telling us that continuing to spend more money will improve jobs and improve the economy. It isn't working. They've been telling us this for the last nine years, and their government's approach is not working. What don't they understand? Did they not read some of the reports that have come forward this year, since the election? Do they not think that the credit agencies know what they're talking about?

Instead of things getting better through government stimulus programs, the debt has doubled and Ontario's jobs crisis keeps getting worse. This government's spend-

ing plan is not working. The Ontario PC Party has a plan—our leader has a plan—for economic growth and job creation, and the best part about our plan is that it doesn't come with a billion-dollar price tag.

Talking about a billion dollars, this government is famous for billion-dollar boondoggles and billion-dollar giveaways to their friends. We had the billion-dollar eHealth scandal. We likely have a billion-dollar screw-up in Mississauga, a billion-dollar mess in Oakville and, of course, we are faced with the Ornge scandal here this year. Of course, it's one issue I'm hearing about in my riding time and time again.

People understand that this is the most scandalous government in the province's history. I'll tell you, Speaker, things need to change. We need to have the all-party committee to look into this mess at Ornge. So, until we get that, I'm going to move adjournment of the debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex has moved adjournment of the debate. Shall the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those against the motion, please say "nay."

I believe the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 0931 to 1001.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I'd ask the members to take their seats, please.

The member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex has moved adjournment of the debate.

All those in favour, please stand and remain standing.

Those opposed, please stand and remain standing.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 19; the nays are 32.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I declare the motion lost.

The member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Thank you, Speaker. It would sure be nice to get the select committee on Ornge set up, when we're talking a billion-dollar boondoggle again by this government.

Of course, we're here, again resuming discussion on Bill 11. I must remind members, especially on the government side if they don't know this, that this is a bill that's calling for another \$160 million in spending—\$160 million, when this government has created a \$16-billion deficit.

Just to remind members of the House—it's nice to see some members on the opposite side here to listen to debate on Bill 11. As I said before the recess, the government is handing out, in some circumstances—in many circumstances—\$300,000 per job in corporate subsidies. I cited a company that received \$1.5 million to create five jobs. This isn't economic policy; this is what you call a slush fund, a Liberal government slush fund. Of course, this is the track record of this government since it was elected in 2003. Corporate welfare was virtually eliminated when they took office, and of course, in this year's budget alone, corporate subsidies are hitting \$3.5 billion. It's no way to create sustainable jobs when Ontario has a

jobs crisis, with 550,000 people out of work, and a debt crisis. Even Don Drummond said the debt, without substantial change, is going to hit \$411 billion.

It is no secret that the global economy remains fragile, and the road to economic growth will be challenging in the current economic climate. The debt crisis in Europe, the slow economic recovery in the United States and increased competition from low-cost jurisdictions continue to impact on our economy. But we are forgetting some minor details with all of this. The rising deficit and the doubling of Ontario's debt started long before the global economic crisis. The recession hit everyone, but this Premier simply has been pursuing the wrong economic policies here in Ontario.

The only person who should be blamed for Ontario's economic situation, Speaker, is this Premier. The Premier has been given advice from experts across the province about how to improve Ontario's economic situation, as has the Minister of Finance. We keep seeing the same thing: Time and time again, this government refuses to listen.

The Premier needs to swallow his pride and take responsibility for his reckless spending. Government spending cannot be what drives the economy, and that is why corporate subsidies, like in Bill 11, are unnecessary and unproductive.

As I told you earlier, as a small business person myself, from southwestern Ontario, and someone who employs well over 60 people at our family business, I can tell you that local businesses are suffering and are being left with no choice, in a lot of cases, but to leave this province due to the economic climate that has been created here—the climate that this government has created.

You see, under this Premier and under this government, we have seen skyrocketing energy rates, increased red tape, increased government bureaucracy and an ineffective and antique apprenticeship system. This is why we have a jobs crisis in the province of Ontario.

Under this Premier and this government, hydro rates have increased eight times since 2003 by a total of 84% or a whopping 150% for families with smart meters. Despite promising Ontario families that his expensive energy experiments and Green Energy Act would only raise rates by 1%, the Premier now admits that the hydro bills will rise 46% by 2015.

I can tell you, Speaker, in talking to many people in southwestern Ontario, in particular people in London and in particular speaking to families in London West, they're really concerned about their future hydro bills; they're concerned about how they're going to continue living in their house. Again, it's the number one issue no matter what government members opposite say. The number one issue that any business talks about, whether they're from Stratford, London, Windsor or Toronto, is hydro bills. Even the Ontario Energy Board acknowledged that this Premier's energy experiments were behind the latest hydro increase when they said new forms of power generation, as a result of this government's Green Energy Act, are costing more to produce.

Speaker, how are small businesses supposed to survive in this province? The increase in hydro rates is unacceptable and is crippling Ontario's economy. You and I know that the price of hydro is an economic essential that can help drive the economy forward. I believe policy should be focused on creating an efficient supply of power at affordable prices—affordability being the key.

Ontario's economic policy has to have a plan for economic development, and the current structure needs to change. According to the Ministry of Energy, electricity prices in this province will double over the next two decades, while the US energy information agency actually projects electricity prices in the United States will decrease over the same time period. If you're an entrepreneur looking to start a business, where would you choose? I ask that question: Where would you choose? In my portfolio, as economic development critic, it's one of the things that entrepreneurs and innovators are telling me, that they're looking elsewhere because of the direction that this Premier and this government are taking Ontario down.

Every jurisdiction we're competing with for jobs and investment is after the same thing: a reliable and diversified supply of power at the lowest cost. Currently, as I said, Ontario doesn't have this. Under the current structure, we are seeing businesses leave Ontario and relocate to a more affordable location. The skyrocketing hydro rates in Ontario are driving business out of Ontario, for good in a lot of cases. It is simply not affordable to operate, in many circumstances, in Ontario.

If the government continues on its current path, London Economics International estimates Ontario will have the absolute highest electricity prices in all of Canada by 2015. I know the businesses I talk to in London, Strathroy, Wallaceburg, Chatham and across southwestern Ontario, in particular, again, the businesses in London West, are deeply concerned about the direction that the Minister of Energy is taking the province down.

The system isn't working. The Auditor General, Moody's investment services, the Conference Board of Canada, the people of Ontario, the official opposition here at Queen's Park—and now Ontario's credit has been downgraded by Moody's. After all this, the Premier refuses to listen and refuses to budge.

Going back to regulations, one of the concerns I keep hearing is that regulations need to be stable in this province. If hydro prices are competitive and regulations are stable, Ontario will attract investment to the province. If there's not competition and prices continue to skyrocket on the electricity front, then we're going to see more and more jobs being lost in the province.

Here in Ontario, we require good home heating at a fair and reasonable price. In order to restore Ontario as an economic leader and to repair the economy, hydro rates must change; affordability, again, has to come back to this province. Once we have re-established this level playing field, then the best way to attract new investment is with a stable regulatory environment where everyone knows the rules of the game, and they only change in predictable ways.

Overregulation must be eliminated and the economy allowed to operate through a free enterprise system. It is unfair that the rules of the game are constantly changing, and because Ontario lacks stability, business owners are not willing to operate here and, in a lot of cases, are leaving, sadly, one by one.

The approaches taken by the current government signal that the Premier and this government have no long-term vision or plan to get there. It sends a wrong message to investors and developers, small businesses and families alike. The result is that the cost of operation in Ontario is simply unaffordable for families or for businesses. It's not the role of the government to micromanage every sector of the economy. I know that a lot of people say, and I tend to agree, that we're living in a nanny state under this Premier. It's, again, not the role of the government to micromanage every sector of our economy. The current government is micromanaging the economy over and over again from its seat here in downtown Toronto. Instead, it is the role of the government to create the right conditions for investment and job creation, and then stay out of the way of business affairs. The Premier of Ontario needs to change the current conditions and help better the economy in the province. Ontario must be favourable again for business operations.

It is about time that the current McGuinty government addresses the economic climate and makes the necessary changes to help repair Ontario's economy for good. This government is so focused on the here and now that it has failed to establish a long-term plan that will help make Ontario's economy a leader in Canada again. We face a growing deficit that is double the size—actually that's triple the size now—of all of the other Canadian provinces combined. We're just heading down the wrong path.

Even through our darkest days, Ontario's tremendous potential has always been there. It's not too late to take a different path to restore Ontario as an economic leader in Canada again. That means creating the conditions for new growth, new investment and new jobs. But here we are today, continuing down the same path as before, blindly throwing money at problems in the hopes that some of it sticks. But this very approach is how we've ended up in the situation we are now in, with hundreds of thousands of people unemployed.

It's really very simple, Speaker: This government has a spending problem, and spending more money when you're in a debt crisis is a bad decision. Thank you.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Seeing the time on the clock, this House now stands recessed until 10:30 a.m.

The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'd like to welcome to the Ontario Legislature today a group representing Jamieson vitamins. Jamieson vitamins is an Ontario-based company and has been in business for the past 90 years.

I would also like to welcome students from the Croton Christian School, who will be joining us momentarily—and also a shout-out to former page and family friend Anthony Boland in the gallery today.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I'd like us to welcome Jennifer Ballagh from London West. She's a director with CanPKU, which is an organization dedicated to providing news, information and support to families with rare inherited metabolic disorders.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'd like to welcome to Queen's Park today Kelli Gibney, a constituent of mine who is here with the delegation from the PKU Awareness Day. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Teresa Piruzza: As you can see, we have a number of students in the gallery today. They're here for the College Student Alliance conference. There are three of them here representing St. Clair College, so I need to give them special recognition. We have Keri Bagley, who's the president; Kate Isley, who's the internal vice-president; and Kyle Pilon, the external vice-president. Thank you for coming, and thank you for your leadership at the college level.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I would like to introduce a friend of mine from North Bay, young Ishmael Van Der Rassel, who is here touring Queen's Park.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I know I took my Jamieson vitamin C this morning, and I hope you did too. I'm very pleased to welcome the representatives from Jamieson Laboratories here today—they're celebrating their 90th year in business—the president and CEO, Vic Neufeld; senior vice-president, Frank Lucchetta; vice-president, sales, Bill Tyler; director of sales, Rob Ricci; director of marketing, Jillian Mariani; brand manager, Tracey Mazza; head of corporate affairs and media relations, Paula Prociuk Blacklock. Congratulations on this remarkable milestone, on behalf of all of us at Queen's Park.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to welcome to the Legislature the Cedarvale Christian School, from Harrison, Ontario: the grade 7 and 8 class and their teacher, Anthony Horst.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I'd like to welcome Brian Costantini, president of the College Student Alliance. As you can see in the gallery today, 85 college students from across Ontario are here for the College Student Alliance May Changeover conference taking place in Toronto from May 8 to 13. They are one of the biggest reasons we have a tuition reduction. I want to thank them for all their work in policy innovation.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, please welcome, in the members' east gallery, the following people who are here at the Legislature to speak with members about PKU awareness: Paola Galvalisi; Cristian Baigorria, Candelaria Baigorria, Trinidad Baigorria and Bautista Baigorria. The Baigorria family has travelled here today from Mississauga—Streetsville. Also, please welcome John Adams, Dr. William Hanley, Rod Elliot and Megan Boyle. We have previously recognized Kelli Gibney and Jennifer Ballagh. Thank you, and welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I think we'd all like to welcome representatives from Community Living To-

ronto, who are at the Legislature today for their annual Appetite for Awareness lunch. All members are invited to stop by room 212A between 11:30 a.m. and 1 p.m. to say hello, pick up a delicious box lunch and give their best to Community Living Toronto.

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Mr. Speaker, I take this opportunity to welcome some family members of page Constantine Ttofias, from the riding of Scarborough-Guildwood, to the Legislature. Today we have his mom, Angela Ttofias; his uncle, Sam Mandrozog; and his grandmother, Helen Ttofias. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. Michael Coteau: We're joined here today by staff and students from Redemption Reintegration Services. It's a great organization that's sustained by the Youth Challenge Fund. The RSS links young people with education, health, employment and housing. On behalf of all of my colleagues here in the Ontario Legislative Assembly, I'd like to welcome them here today.

Mr. Mike Colle: On behalf of the member from Vaughan-King-Aurora—

Mr. Greg Sorbara: Just Vaughan.

Mr. Mike Colle:—Vaughan and myself, I'd like to welcome the vice-president of sales with Jamieson Laboratories, Rob Ricci, who played for the St. Michael's Buzzers and went on to the play for the Notre Dame Fighting Irish hockey team. Welcome, Rob.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): In the Speaker's gallery today, all the way from Germany, we have joining us Olivia Linden and Daniella Schiffer; and from the great riding of Brant, their great aunt and relatives, the former MPP for Brantford in the 34th Parliament, Mr. Dave Neumann, and his wife, Elfrieda. Welcome.

USE OF QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I want to take a moment to clarify the disposition of standing order 37(a) and specifically the clause relating to the requirement that questions are to be urgent or of public importance.

I think all members would acknowledge that the language used in this particular standing order is somewhat subjective. As my predecessor in this chair once observed, "One man's pothole is another man's crater." It is simply not possible for the Speaker to establish a weighted hierarchy of the content of questions asked in this House.

Many years ago, every question had to be vetted in advance by the Speaker. I respectfully submit that this House is not interested in going back to that practice. Indeed, when it comes to content, frequently a question asked on the government side may be on exactly the same topic as one previously asked by the opposition, and still the Speaker is hectored—to you and I, heckled—over the application of standing order 37(a).

This is not a new challenge for a Speaker. To quote from Speaker Turner in 1982, "If I were to apply standing order 27(a)"—now 37(a)—"in its strictest sense, there would be very few questions allowed in this House.

Based on tradition and precedent and historic reference, if you will, the people on this side of the House have as much right to ask a question as people" on this side of the House.

I cannot apply the standards of questioning to the government members that I do not apply to the opposition members. Going forward, I would ask all members on both sides to demonstrate some respect for the right of every private member to ask questions of the executive branch, and I thank you for that understanding.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is for the Premier. For months, Premier, Tim Hudak, myself and other members of the Progressive Conservative caucus of Ontario have stood in this Legislature and urged you to implement a mandatory public sector wage freeze, and on every occasion, you have refused. You hid behind every excuse in the book. We told you that without a legislated wage freeze, your budget couldn't hope to put Ontario back on the path to recovery. You rejected our recommendation time and time again.

Premier, have you finally seen the light? Do you finally understand that you need to legislate the wage freeze for Ontario's public service? And will you, right now, declare your support for our bill that will seek to do exactly that?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm delighted to receive the question and to join this, I think, very important debate yet again. I want to restate as well that the official opposition and our government, I believe, share the same objective: We need to demonstrate restraint when it comes to public sector compensation. Where we differ is in terms of how we are going to get there.

I will once again draw to my honourable colleague's attention the fact that their approach was duly considered by all the other provinces that are running deficits—and there are eight others—as well as the federal government, and they rejected that approach. In fact, the federal government has legislated a 1.5% pay hike. So I'd again recommend to my honourable colleague that while we share the same objective, it's important that we put in place a process that will prove to be effective, and that's why we're pursuing the approach that we're taking.

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: You can't talk out of both sides of your mouth, Premier, and you're doing it again. Either you are with us and support a mandatory wage freeze, or you choose to continue to dig Ontario's finances into a deeper hole. You have spent two years dancing around this issue and it's time to finally declare your intentions and commit to a plan. Will you cut the talking points out

for once, and will you tell this House that you will vote for our legislation?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would caution the member on using language that may be tiptoeing towards saying something that he can't say directly.

Premier.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, again, I can't agree with my honourable colleague. I look forward to seeing the particular legislation, but I am assuming it's going to be informed by the approach that they've articulated in this House, and we can't support that.

I will say to my honourable colleague—I'll refer him once again to page 70 of our budget, which says as follows: "The fiscal plan provides no funding for incremental compensation increases for new collective agreements." We couldn't be more explicit in terms of the approach that we're going to bring.

To get there, we feel duty bound to engage our collective bargaining partners in the public sector in the process. We need to sit down with them. We need to negotiate. We need to bargain fairly and firmly. We've also made it perfectly clear that if we cannot achieve the objectives stated in the budget, then we will take necessary measures in this very Legislature. I think we couldn't be more explicit than that, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Peter Shurman: When our leader, Tim Hudak, met with you in November, Premier, he urged you to implement a wage freeze. You rejected that idea. When I met with your finance minister, I urged him to implement a wage freeze. He rejected the idea. Now, a few months later, you claim to have found religion and you're musing about wage freezes. When are you going to finally decide whether you're coming or going?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think I've addressed this a number of times. But here's another issue I'd like to throw into the mix, if you will. I'm concerned that the official opposition is rejecting some of the choices that we've made to find savings as part of our budget. They want to protect a subsidy for racetrack owners that's \$335 million every year. They want to cut corporate income taxes at a time when we can't afford to—that's \$845 million every year. They don't want to make any changes to the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission—that's \$135 million every year. They want to keep old jails open, which we can't afford to do. That costs us \$137 million every year. They want to make more cuts to business education taxes at a time when we can't afford to. That's \$300 million every year. When we add up what it is that they want to do, it's costing us \$2.1 billion on an annual basis. We can't afford to do that.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Peter Shurman: Back to the Premier: Yesterday our deputy leader presented you with legal arguments that proved you can legislate a wage freeze today. So the court ruling excuse is out the window. Nobody in this

building believes your press, nobody, perhaps, except you. Premier, stop talking out of both sides of your mouth. Take a position. Are you ready to concede—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member, I had cautioned you. Now I am asking you to withdraw.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Premier, are you ready to concede that we had the right idea all along about a legislated wage freeze?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We will never concede our duty to act responsibly. What we have laid out is a plan. It was laid out in the budget. We are approaching it through the mechanisms available to us that will withstand court challenge, based on legal advice, based on what other provinces have done, based on court rulings in other provinces.

In order to achieve the goal that we both agree on, we believe and have solid advice to the effect that this is the appropriate path to ensure that we're able to meet those targets that we've already established in the budget.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: Minister, here is what happened since Tim Hudak's meeting with the Premier and my meeting with you. Moody's gave Ontario a negative outlook. That was a warning; you didn't listen. S&P gave Ontario a negative outlook; you still didn't listen. Moody's downgraded Ontario's credit rating. You made excuses for your failures, and your own economist, Don Drummond, warned you that Ontario faces a \$30-billion deficit and a \$400-billion total in debt, yet you brought in a budget with billions more in spending and you refused to implement a wage freeze. With that key cost-cutting measure missing from your budget, is it any wonder we refused to support your budget motion?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Again, I would emphasize to the opposition that in order to achieve the targets that we've laid out, we are following a course of action. I'll remind him, as I reminded their deputy leader yesterday, that in British Columbia the government lost a case that cost them \$80 million. I think there were 8,000-or-so workers. We're talking about 1.2 million workers. We have to respect not only the collective bargaining process but the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the right of people to organize and bargain collectively.

I believe, working together, we can achieve these objectives that are laid out in the budget as we move to preserve and enhance our education and health care systems, which are vital to a strong and vibrant economy in the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Speaker, I'm trying very hard to get a direct answer. Minister, when will you be direct with this House and with Ontarians who are watching you right now? When?

You opposed the legislated wage freeze in October, in November, in December and every day since, until about

two days ago. You refuse to listen to us and you reject our recommendations. Everyone here knows it. We were there; you were absent. Now you're squirming because you're caught between that rock and a hard place, between the need to prevent complete disaster and alienating your union pals. Make the right decision for once and be direct. Support our private member's bill that reflects our position on the need for a legislated wage freeze, a position that we have held from the very beginning. Will you vote with us in support of that bill?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: No, we won't support that bill, because it won't work. It is a political document that's designed to undermine good working relationships in the public and broader public sectors. The plan we've laid out, in fact, is the one that will allow us to achieve the budgetary objectives we've set out.

We are less interested in demonizing public servants and others, as the opposition is, than we are in working with everyone in Ontario to move back to balance, to make the investments that are necessary to improve our health and education systems and build that better economy for the future.

Mr. Speaker, to be clear and unequivocal: Their plan won't work. It's a failed document and we won't support it.

MINING INDUSTRY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday's announcement of a planned refinery in the riding of Nickel Belt proves that Ontario has the skilled workforce and the ability to process natural resources and create prosperity and good jobs right here in Ontario. Unfortunately, Speaker, we have a long way to go to make those jobs a reality. Yesterday, the government told us they still didn't know whether they plan to allow resources from the Ring of Fire to be exported overseas for processing. Do they know now?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm pleased to take the question, but first of all, I think we can and should all join in celebrating an extraordinary new investment in northern Ontario. This is the first proposal for development in the largest mining find in Canada in some 100 years. We're talking of billions of dollars, thousands of jobs and the generation of wealth that will benefit families in northern Ontario for decades to come. I think it's great news.

I think our shared responsibility now is to do everything we can to maximize those benefits so that they benefit northerners, First Nations and Ontario generally. I'm feeling very optimistic. I'm looking forward to any positive, constructive suggestions that come from either opposition party in this regard.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: People hoping for good, sustainable jobs think that this is a pretty important detail: whether or not the materials are going to be exported somewhere else to be processed. The government needs to do a much better job at answering them. They're counting their chickens before they hatch, by the looks of it.

In testimony at the federal Standing Committee on Natural Resources, Cliffs' senior vice-president said this: "Our proposed project includes exporting approximately 40% of the product produced on site." They'll need an exemption under the Mining Act to do that. Does the Premier plan on giving them the exemption?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, it is no secret; my honourable colleague has been consistent in this regard. She believes that we should put up walls around the province of Ontario. We live in a global economy. We can compete with the best in the world, and we can win. We have the biggest mining sector now in North America. I'm talking exploration, I'm talking production, and when it comes to financing, Speaker, it's the biggest in the world.

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I say to my honourable colleague that we cannot put up walls. We cannot say to those people who are sending their raw materials here that we're no longer going to process those here, and we cannot say to proponents such as Cliffs that there's no way that they can send any of those materials to other parts of the world outside of Ontario to process. That is to ignore the reality of a globalized economy. I'm confident at the end of the day that this is a net positive proposal for northern Ontario and Ontario generally.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier is absolutely right: I have been consistent; New Democrats have been consistent. We believe our natural resources should be putting Ontarians back to work.

Our natural resources are a gift, and we have to use them wisely. People in Ontario, whether they're from the north or anywhere else, want to see those resources used to create good, sustainable, value-added jobs, not shipped away to create jobs overseas and products that we then buy back at twice the price.

For people looking for work, for communities that need development, these are not minor details. Does the Premier plan to grant an exemption to allow the resources to be shipped away for processing? And if he doesn't know yet, when is he going to know?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I remind my honourable colleague that we're building the processing plant here as part of this proposal. I will also remind her that we are presently processing minerals in Ontario that are coming from four other provinces and also coming in from the US, Peru, Chile and Australia.

The Falconbridge smelter in Sudbury processes less than 30% of Ontario content. Cameco in Blind River and Port Hope processes uranium that comes from Saskatchewan. Handy & Harman in Etobicoke imports two thirds of their precious metals from outside the province. Johnson Matthey Ltd., with plants across the provinces, processes about 90% foreign content. In my hometown of Ottawa, the Royal Canadian Mint takes in two thirds of their content from outside the province of Ontario. This is how we create jobs for Ontarians here in Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Come to order.

MINING INDUSTRY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier.

The Ring of Fire is not going to work unless it moves ahead with the support and partnership of First Nations. Now, despite this government's promises of a relationship of respect, First Nations affected by the development weren't even told about the government's announcement until the night before.

Will the Premier explain why First Nations were left out of discussions until the last minute. Is that what he considers to be respectful?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the minister responsible for aboriginal affairs.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I appreciate the question from the member opposite because it gives me an opportunity to talk about the supports that are already in place. The reason I went to Thunder Bay yesterday with the Minister of Natural Resources was to talk with the First Nations about how we're going to move forward.

There was a business decision that was made; that's true. That business decision was not discussed in public. There have been a lot of informal conversations. But what I said yesterday and what is the truth is that the formal conversations with First Nations begin now. All of the supports that need to be in place, that's the conversation we need to have now. It was not possible to have that conversation surrounding the business issue. And yes, we called the night before, we talked to a number of the chiefs to let them know so they wouldn't read about it in the newspaper because the business decision had been that under the radar.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: That's respectful, Speaker; so that they don't have to read it in a newspaper. I'm sure Sonny Gagnon from Aroland made you know very well how respectful—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Peterborough and the Minister of Economic Development, come to order.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The First Nations people who live near the Ring of Fire want to share in the jobs, in the wealth and the prosperity that the opportunity brings, Speaker. Leaving them out of the loop during months and months of discussion only raises the risk of drawn-out disputes and delays. Nishnawbe Aski Nation Deputy Grand Chief Terry Waboose called it "a classic example of development going ahead without adequate consultation."

Is the Premier concerned that his government is off to a pretty bad start with the Ring of Fire?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: You know, Mr. Speaker, one of the first trips I made when I was appointed to this position was to Webequie, which, as the member oppos-

ite may know, is one of the communities that is closest to the Ring of Fire. I had conversations with the leadership there. I know absolutely clearly that training opportunities and economic development opportunities, as well as social supports, need to be in place.

I had a conversation with Deputy Grand Chief Terry Waboose yesterday and I said to him that what is extremely important is that we don't undermine the opportunity that the Ring of Fire presents; that we understand that the children who live in all of the communities in the north need to be able to benefit. If we spend the next six months undermining and drawing lines in the sand and creating conflict, then those children will not benefit from the economic development of the Ring of Fire.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, saying a lot is not the same as listening a lot, and that's what this government needs to learn.

There is a lot of real opportunity here to bring hope to communities that are struggling with severe joblessness and poverty. But if that's going to happen, development has to bring jobs, education and revenue-sharing. So far, First Nations have seen very little in terms of commitments from this government.

Is the Premier finally ready to roll up his sleeves and work respectfully with First Nations communities?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think it is critical that we recognize exactly what's happened here. The Webequie First Nation's statement yesterday said, "Webequie First Nation acknowledges Ontario's commitment to support the directly impacted First Nations and to engage the federal government in the trilateral process. It is important for all levels of government, including local impacted First Nations governments, to work together towards a co-operative framework." That's what the Webequie First Nation said yesterday.

I will be the first to admit, Mr. Speaker, that there are needs in our First Nations communities, that there have to be supports in place. We've been putting \$8 million a year into the Ring of Fire communities to begin to support and prepare for the Ring of Fire.

If we do not take our responsibilities seriously to help communities come together and work together on this file, then the Ring of Fire will not benefit the children who need to benefit. So I call on the party opposite to work with us to that end.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Minister of Health. Here's what happens when you put people in charge of an air ambulance service who know nothing about it: Rather than instill confidence in the public and in the front-line staff, you undermine them.

Yesterday, the news was that the Ornge CEO and the minister both embarrassed themselves with defensive excuses for the inability of Ornge once again to respond to an emergency.

The emergency call came in to Ornge at 6:44 a.m. We were told that the incoming crew was not available until 7:15 because of Transport Canada's duty day restrictions.

Apparently the minister and Mr. McKerlie didn't think to ask why the night shift crew that was scheduled to be on duty until 7 o'clock didn't respond to the call.

A simple question, and so I will ask the question: Minister, where was that crew that was scheduled to be on duty until 7? Why didn't they respond?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, the member opposite is referring to a tragic motor vehicle accident. My heart goes out to the family. I can only imagine how difficult this is for them. The family has asked that this issue not be politicized, and I intend to respect that.

What I can tell you, Speaker, is that we will learn any lessons that are to be learned from this incident. Yesterday morning, I spoke to Dr. Barry McLellan, who is on the board of Ornge. He is the CEO at Sunnybrook hospital. He is an expert in patient safety, and I have asked him to ensure that a full investigation is done and that any lessons that are to be learned from this incident are, in fact, implemented.

1100

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: Now we have to ask the question why the new CEO and the minister insisted on continuing with the implementation of the failed Mazza plan to take on total responsibility for the operation of the helicopter fleet.

Mr. McKerlie was warned that the Ornge organization did not have either the staff or the capacity or the experience to take over that operation. He was warned that Ornge would face a staffing shortage. He was urged to extend the existing agreement with Canadian Helicopters while Ornge was going through this transition. CHL has all of the pilots and all of the maintenance necessary. In fact, CHL would have had to pay a major penalty had it failed to respond to yesterday's emergency.

Why did the minister and Mr. McKerlie insist on recklessly pursuing the Mazza plan? That is why we're in the situation that we're in. That's why we're understaffed. Why did they insist—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I think that it's important that we actually let a review of this incident happen. I think that it would be a mistake for anyone in this House to jump to conclusions about what actually happened. I think we have to let the process unfold. I can assure you that my ministry officials are asking a series of questions about the incident. The coroner has been informed of this incident, and the coroner will make a determination about whether or not he in fact wants to do an inquest.

MINING INDUSTRY

Ms. Sarah Campbell: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, First Nations communities expressed their

strong disappointment that they only heard about the Cliffs announcement at the last minute rather than being invited to the table months ago to work on a path forward.

Here is Minister Wynne's explanation for the process: "I think people will have to speak to Cliffs about that because they set the parameters of the discussion."

Premier, this is your responsibility. Stop trying to pass the buck. Why won't you consult with First Nations communities about development in the north?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: The reality is, we have ongoing consultation and dialogue with our First Nations communities. One of the most important announcements yesterday was the framework for future consultation with our First Nations. They told us that regional infrastructure supports were necessary for that framework consultation. We listened. They told us that social supports were necessary for that framework consultation. We listened. They told us that regional and environmental impacts were very important to the framework discussion. We listened. They told us that resource benefit sharing must be on the table. We listened.

This is what the Wahnapiitae First Nation chief said: that the Cliffs announcement means Wahnapiitae First Nation—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Back to the Premier: This government has made a much-awaited announcement that was negotiated behind closed doors, without any job, education and revenue-sharing guarantees, and without consultation. After ignoring First Nations for months, this government made an 11th hour effort to divide and conquer by negotiating with only some of the First Nations communities, and even then it failed to provide guarantees.

The Ring of Fire will only be successful if it works for families in the north. After leaving First Nations out of the process at the start, why should First Nations trust the Premier that real, meaningful consultation will take place now?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Real, meaningful consultation took place in the past; real, meaningful consultation is taking place now; and real and meaningful consultation will take place in the future.

You know what else they said? They said that they want to establish a protocol by which our federal government becomes engaged. They want a tripartite arrangement and agreement for discussion. We agree with that.

They said that they want to have the benefits of the Ring of Fire development through resource revenue-sharing. We said that we would enter into those discussions.

They want meaningful jobs from the Ring of Fire development. We guaranteed, through our involvement, that we would provide the supports necessary to ensure that they're ready for these very, very important, well-paying, long-lasting jobs.

The reality is, we will continue to consult and dialogue with our First Nations communities, because we understand that in order for the Ring of Fire to maximize its benefits, it must maximize the potential for each and every person in Ontario.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. David Oraziatti: My question is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. As a northerner, I'm very pleased with yesterday's announcement regarding Cliffs Natural Resources' intention to spend approximately \$3.35 billion in Ontario to move forward on its chromite project in the Ring of Fire. Cliffs announced their plans to build an all-weather road and mine in the northwest, as well as a processing facility in Sudbury.

We've heard some criticism regarding the location of jobs. We've heard the opposition calling for details regarding the government's intended commitments. Minister, how does this important announcement reinforce the progress that we're making on our northern growth plan, and can you provide us with more specific details on the project?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: A very, very important question, Speaker. Yesterday's announcement is great news for Ontario, it's great news for—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Not acceptable.

Minister.

Hon. John Gerretsen: You guys can't accept good news.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: As the Attorney General says, the opposition cannot accept good news. But let me continue this good news. This announcement yesterday was great news for Ontario, great news for our northern communities and great news for our First Nations. This \$3.3-billion investment in Ontario, predominantly in northern Ontario, in fact aligns perfectly with the northern growth plan.

The northern growth plan talks about the future of job creation. It talks about the future of the developing sustainable opportunities. This is what this Ring of Fire announcement yesterday was all about: job creation, inclusive opportunity and the ability to sustain and grow northern Ontario over the next 30 years.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. David Oraziatti: Minister, as you're aware, the Ring of Fire represents one of the most significant mineral deposits Ontario has seen in over a century, with multi-generational mineral production opportunities on a scale similar to historic world-class mining areas in communities such as Timmins, Sudbury, Kirkland Lake and Red Lake.

This is great news for the entire region, and as I understand, the development will generate long-term economic benefits throughout the north, such as the building of roads, transportation improvements and new infrastructure. Ontarians understand that it's important to ensure we do everything possible to maximize the use of our

natural resources, which includes creating important value-added jobs.

However, over the past several months, the NDP have been calling for a short-sighted processing plan for Ontario ore. Minister, can you please share with us further details regarding processing arrangements, and if in fact you would consider this proposal?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Part of the mining cycle is ensuring that processing takes place. For months, the NDP said that our processing facility would be going outside of Ontario for a variety of factors; the reality is, this government made this processing facility happen right here in northern Ontario.

What the NDP fails to realize in their short-sighted policy is that we're in a global economy. If, in fact, we were to build barriers or walls around Ontario, jobs in Nickel Belt would be lost; 70% of Xstrata's processing at their smelter takes place from matte brought in from outside of Ontario. In Algoma-Manitowlin, the chemical facility would be laying off, because they import material, uranium material, from Saskatchewan.

The reality is, you can't build walls around Ontario. It doesn't work to sustain opportunity for Ontario.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Minister of Health. This government is keen to blame the Ornge scandal on so-called rogue operators, but the troubling events that have transpired at Ornge have happened for one reason only: The Minister of Health failed to uphold the responsibilities of her office. She repeatedly ignored warning after warning about corrupt practices and policies that put patients' lives at risk. The minister has failed to provide oversight, and patients are paying the price.

The Auditor General's report cited 21 cases of compromised patient safety. Minister, are these 21 incidents being investigated and, if so, will you make the results public?

1110

Hon. Deborah Matthews: What I can tell the member opposite and the people of this province is that patient safety is the highest priority for the leadership at Ornge. The new oversight and the new transparency at Ornge will make it very clear to the public about those improvements.

I'm urging the member opposite to actually acknowledge the importance of Bill 50, to support Bill 50, which will entrench in law the kind of transparency and oversight that is required. In our hospitals, we've seen the difference it makes when we report to the public on safety indicators. We want to bring that same rigour to Ornge.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: The actions of this government and this minister have been too little, too late. In order to restore public confidence in Ornge, a full public investigation is required, but this government is determined to keep sweeping this under the rug. After the

minister stood in this House and agreed to a select committee on Ornge, she and her government have stonewalled the will of this Legislature.

When Progressive Conservative staff contacted the minister's office to inquire about the 13 confirmed investigations of compromised patient safety conducted by your ministry, your staff advised us that this information was only available under a freedom-of-information request.

I ask the minister, why are you so insistent to block every effort to get to the bottom of this scandal? Why aren't you doing everything you can to restore public confidence in Ornge?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: There has been a significant focus on the goings-on at Ornge, and I think the changes that have come into effect as a result of that are absolutely the changes that are needed.

The Auditor General did a very good job revealing practices at Ornge that were completely unacceptable. As a result of that, we have entirely new leadership, a completely new board, including the resignation of one Kelly Mitchell, who I think you probably are familiar with. I understand he has actually donated to your campaigns in the past. He is no longer on the board at Ornge. There is new leadership and a renewed rigour and a renewed commitment to patient safety.

On our side of the House, we have a new performance agreement. We have referred the incidents to the OPP.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. In 2009, Chris Mazza's salary disappeared from the sunshine list. Yesterday, the director of legal services told the committee for public accounts that if the salary of the CEO of a publicly funded company disappeared from the sunshine list, it would raise flags. New Democrats raised this issue back in 2010. Not only did it raise flags for the NDP, but it also would have raised flags for the Ministry of Finance. So how is it that somehow it escaped the Minister of Health completely?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I was just saying, there has been a focus on Ornge, and I think it's a healthy focus, because it has shone the light on practices that were completely unacceptable.

We have taken very aggressive steps, as the member from Newmarket–Aurora has said, to fix the problems at Ornge. Now I'm very pleased to say that we have a new performance agreement in place, Speaker. We have legislation before this House. I am very hopeful that members of both opposition parties will, in fact, support Bill 50, amendments to the Ambulance Act, that will provide significantly more oversight and transparency.

We do want Ornge to have the rigour that we have in our hospitals. I do want to have the power that, in future, if the need arises—and I hope it doesn't—we have the ability to put in a supervisor.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Yesterday a former executive of Ornge, Mr. Rick Potter, testified that through his entire tenure with Ornge, he was paid by the not-for-profit side of Ornge, yet his salary also disappeared after 2009. In fact, he said that it was corporate policy not to disclose salaries, in spite of the fact that he was paid by a not-for-profit agency directly funded by the Ministry of Health.

Now the ministry can't blame that Ornge was transferring funds to the for-profit, because it was not the case. For the missing salaries information, people would say that should have raised flags. Will she admit that the reason nothing was done is because she failed in her duty of oversight of Ornge?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, quite the contrary. When I became aware of the issues at Ornge, I took very quick action and very strong action. The member opposite is referring to the committee that is now under way that has been going on now for many weeks.

I was happy to have had the opportunity to appear before the committee, as have people like Lynne Golding. We know now that Guy Giorno and Lynne Golding, two very prominent Conservatives, were the ones who set up this salary deal to hide salaries from the sunshine list. They also hid information from the Auditor General.

These are serious issues, and I'm very happy that the OPP is investigating allegations at Ornge.

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Many young people, in fact approximately one in five, are dealing with mental health challenges such as anxiety, depression, mood disorders, schizophrenia and eating disorders.

I am proud that mental health, particularly children's mental health, has become such an important priority. I think we can all agree that when we provide children and families with the supports they need, they have the opportunity to succeed.

As a member who served on the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, I'd ask the minister to outline what positive steps this government has taken to provide mental health supports to the children and youth of Ontario.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I thank the member from Scarborough–Rouge River for the question. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to start by recognizing that this week is Children's Mental Health Week and to thank everyone who has worked so hard to raise awareness and decrease the stigma associated with mental illness.

I also want to thank Margaret McCain, the former Lieutenant Governor of New Brunswick, who, a couple of weeks ago, donated \$10 million to child and youth mental health services at CAMH here in Toronto—the largest donation of its kind in Canada.

Yesterday, I visited Associated Youth Services of Peel to see first-hand how our government is building a mental health system that delivers the services our children

and youth need, when they need it and as close to home as possible. Thanks to our government's comprehensive mental health and addictions strategy, Peel now has 48 new child and youth mental health workers.

I'm proud of our government's continued investment in children's mental health.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Thank you, Minister. I'm pleased to hear that our government has taken concrete action to support the children's mental health system in this province. Great strides have been made in awareness and stigma reduction, but there is still work to be done.

Mr. Speaker, it is our shared responsibility—government, community partners and private sector alike—to help bring about a brighter future for all children who struggle with mental health challenges. I ask the minister: What is being done across Ontario to help fulfill the vision of creating a more coordinated and responsive mental health system that helps children and youth get the help they need when they need it?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: To the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I say thank you to the member from Scarborough—Rouge River for highlighting this very, very important issue.

Schools are often the place where a young person with mental health needs is identified. That's why I'm very pleased that 400 child and youth mental health workers have been hired to work with students in schools, mental health agencies and courts to address mental health issues.

It's also why I'm very pleased that 144 new mental health and addictions nurses are being hired to work with schools to help students with mild-to-complex mental health or substance abuse problems. I'm very proud that my ministry is able to support these new nurses. It means that 20,000 more kids will get access to the care that they need.

CONCUSSIONS

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: My question on kids' safety is for the Minister of Education. Minister, you have a new bill dealing with concussions, and that's a good thing. Many here would know that I coach kids' hockey, as many do, and we see a problem: that high school hockey is not governed by the rules found in Hockey Canada that govern virtually all other hockey in Canada. As such, there is no checking-to-the-head penalty found in high school hockey as is found in all other youth sports in Canada.

1120

Locally, during a high school game in Oshawa, it got out of hand. My son's best friend, Evan Way, took a debilitating check from behind that broke his leg, possibly ending his hockey life. The main reason it all occurred was because high school refs are not governed by Hockey Canada and do not have the same strict guidelines and oversight found in all other hockey that is

governed by Hockey Canada—as such, allowing checks to the head.

Minister, can you commit to review high school hockey or other high school sports to minimize concussions and, quite frankly, work with those organizations that are already doing so through officials in their systems?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I really want to thank the member opposite for his question, for his involvement with sports and for raising this important issue. We are very much committed to ensuring that we take steps in this province to ensure that all of our students are safe and protected and that we do everything that we can to prevent concussions.

Yes, I'm proud to have brought in the concussion prevention act and that we continue to do work. We've actually already begun to meet and consider the best advice from experts on concussion protocols and what that should be. The conversations are ongoing. I invite the member opposite to give us his best advice. I invite everyone in this Legislature to give us their best advice, because we want to make sure that our students are safe and protected in schools. We will take the leadership role when it comes to concussions in Ontario. So, thank you for that advice.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Minister, although teachers do require a background check, because there is no governing of high school hockey by Hockey Canada, there is no background check for all officials or non-teaching volunteers involved in high school hockey and other sports. Minister, can you commit to review guidelines found by organizations like Hockey Canada to protect our kids not only from concussions but also ensuring that those people working with our youth should be allowed to work with Ontario's future, our youth?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Again, thank you very much to the member opposite. I know that he has been a strong proponent of reference checks for those who work with our young people in coaching activities. It has been something that is an issue that I have worked on also for many years.

What I will say is that right now all board employees and employees of organizations that provide services to boards must have a criminal reference check. Almost all of our boards also have the requirement that any other individual have a criminal reference check. So if there is a vacuum in that, if there is a place that we need to take a look at, we certainly will do that.

Again, I am encouraged by this co-operative approach. I hope that this will mean that we can work in co-operation, especially when it comes to our children's benefit, and that we will perhaps hear less bell-ringing in this Legislature and more co-operative questions that help us protect our kids.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. Jonah Schein: This question is for the Premier. Last Sunday afternoon, Premier, Barrie Conrod, a 52-

year-old from Waterloo, was out for a bike ride with his wife. He was struck from behind by an SUV, and he was killed. I know that our hearts and condolences go out to Barrie's wife and to his family, but as legislators we must do more. We must make our streets safer for cyclists. We know how: It means investing in bike lanes, in paved shoulders and bike paths on Ontario's roads and highways. The government has a draft cycling strategy that proposes to do just that. My question is: When will it release the strategy?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I welcome the question. First of all, on behalf of all of us in this Legislature, I extend my sympathies to the family and friends affected by this very unfortunate incident. I think we all sense a shared responsibility as well to find a way to ensure that we can strike some kind of a happy balance when it comes to vehicles on our roads and people who choose to bicycle. We'd all like to live in a province where we have struck that balance and people feel that they can get out on a road and travel safely on their bicycle.

What I can do, on behalf of my colleague the Minister of Transportation, is undertake to the honourable gentlemen to inquire a bit more about the strategy so that we can make that public.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jonah Schein: Thank you, Premier, for that answer. I'll direct this question to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You can't do that.

Mr. Jonah Schein: Sorry, back to the Premier, then. Ontario's cycling policy is 20 years out of date. The government's draft cycling strategy, which we've obtained through a freedom-of-information request, promises to match municipal investments in bike paths, in bike lanes and in paved shoulders. Quebec has invested in cycling infrastructure, but the Ontario government has delayed the release of this strategy, and there's a concern that the government is going to backtrack now on the proposed funding that is committed and is required.

Will the Premier tell us when a cycling strategy will be released so roads can be made safer for cyclists and tragic deaths can be prevented?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think the member opposite knows that we have had a demand management transportation policy in place, where municipalities have been able to apply for funding to build infrastructure in their communities. I think the member opposite also knows that we began building paved shoulders on some of our road projects—on Highway 6, for example, and other projects around the province. Where there is enough tourism, where there's a demand, we are building an extra metre on either side of the road, and the Share the Road signs are going up. So we've actually taken great strides in the last few years to make the roads of the province more cycle-friendly.

I know that the member opposite and we on this side have worked closely with Share the Road. Eleanor

McMahon is a huge advocate for cycling in the province. We've looked at the Route Verte in Quebec, and we know that, ultimately, we would like to see that kind of network around the province. That work is ongoing in the ministry, and we thank the member for the question.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, my question this morning is for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. Yesterday, Ministers Bartolucci, Gravelle and Wynne welcomed a significant announcement about thousands of jobs being created in northern Ontario. Given the global climate, this is outstanding news.

However, we've heard that some First Nation leaders are expressing concern about the lack of involvement in the decision-making process and development happening without the consent of First Nations communities. They want to be sure that they're involved and have a say about what happens on their precious land.

Can the minister tell this House why this isn't happening?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: There have been many conversations—informal conversations—over the past few years, and I want to clarify that the formal process begins now. There was a business decision that was made, and that business decision meant that the processor will be in the Sudbury area. I was in Thunder Bay to talk with the First Nations about beginning that formal process.

This is a huge opportunity for the whole north. We know that part of the potential success of this project is that we need to work with First Nations. What we've said is that we need to talk about economic development opportunities, supports, workforce readiness, skills and training. We need to talk about family wellness and well-being, including addiction treatment and access to health services. And we need to talk about education, skills and training. All of that is part of the conversation that begins now.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Leal: That certainly was a detailed and comprehensive response.

The minister mentioned that now is the time to get this work started. We know that First Nations in northern Ontario want to be involved in this work and want to have a say so that they're sure to benefit from this outstanding, once-in-a-generation opportunity.

Can the minister tell this House how we're going to involve our First Nation partners so they can take advantage of all the benefits and opportunities that will become available with the announcement that was made yesterday?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As a start, what Ontario is proposing is that we set up a formal tripartite discussion with the federal government and with the First Nation communities to start to talk about those important industrial, environmental, and health and social supports that need to be in place.

But I want to make a bigger point here. This is a very important moment in Ontario's history. When the history is written, what will it say? Will the history say that at this juncture, Ontario was not able to work with all of the parties, was not able to capitalize on this huge resource and bring everyone to the table—and First Nations must be at that table with us, making those decisions. Or will the history books say that we collectively devolved into partisan wrangling and were unable to capitalize for future generations? I hope that's not the route that we choose.

PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is to the Minister of Health. For the third time since 2006, Minister, your government has decreased the price of generic drugs. History will show that a reduction in the prices is actually increasing the shortages in availability of drugs.

1130

For my first 11 years as a pharmacist, shortages were few and far between. But since 2006, shortages are a daily occurrence—shortages such as warfarin, a blood thinner that keeps people alive; amitriptyline, an antidepressant; primidone for epilepsy; and phenobarbital for epilepsy.

Minister, what also occurs here is that single-source drugs increase. You only have to look as far as Sandoz as to what occurs when there are too many single-source drugs on the market. When one little thing occurs, shortages drastically increase.

Minister, do you consider the aspect of people having the availability to access the drugs they need or do you just look at the bottom line?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I'm a bit surprised, I must confess, to have this question from a member who actually owns a number of pharmacies in his community.

I do know, Speaker, that pharmacists were not happy with the changes we made to bring down the price of generic drugs, but I think that their warning that there would be closures of pharmacies, that people would not be able to access drugs, has actually not borne out to have happened. In fact, we've got more pharmacies in Ontario than we had before we took on the price of generic drugs.

The issue of shortages is an important one. I can tell the member opposite that the best information I have indicates that there is absolutely no relationship between drug shortages and the changes we've made to generic drugs. If he has information to the contrary, I'd be very interested in having him share that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Back to the minister. Minister, I'm proud to be a pharmacist and a health care professional, and my focus in life is the safety and the care of my patients.

Minister, you've announced that 10 of the drugs will have reductions, yet you haven't taken into consideration

how the list is going to be maintained and what happens when new drugs move onto the market that are going to be high-volume and high-cost. In fact, you've sprung this decision without consulting with the industry and without consulting with patients. Minister, can you tell your patients why you make such serious and drastic decisions without consulting with industry and the patients?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm actually very proud of the changes that we have made to the pricing of generic drugs. We have saved \$600 million per year as the result of the drug reforms.

For a representative from a party who is saying that we're spending too much but then cannot support us as we actually make those tough decisions to bring down the price of generic drugs, I'm just a bit confused, Speaker.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of the Environment will withdraw.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I withdraw, yes.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me; stop the clock. He is right, but technically, quite frankly there is an order that allows someone to bring clarity to that question.

Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I say, I'm proud of the changes that we've made. I'm proud that we've been able to bring down the price of drugs not just for the government but for the public as well. These are important changes, and I will continue to drive the best value for health care dollars.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. Premier, a simple question: Does your government believe that all citizens of this province have the right to freedom of speech and expression, and would your government stand in the way of those rights at any time?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: This is a trick question.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Wait for the supplementary.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I don't see it, but I sense that there's a trap here, Speaker, and I look forward to the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, the trap happens to be how people in northern Ontario are feeling. Imagine how they felt yesterday when the Ministry of Transportation contacted the union and said that the Ministry of Transportation would be taking all of the signs off the highway on Highways 11 and 17 that are expressing their displeasure when it comes to the privatization of the ONTC.

So I ask you again: Does your government believe that the people of this province have the right to freedom of

expression? If so, will you reverse that decision by the Ministry of Transportation?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I believe, and I stand to be corrected in this regard, that there are some very definitive signage policies with respect to locating signs on our highways. That has a lot to do with, of course, public safety and maintaining focus on the road ahead as opposed to signs on the side. I suspect that any decisions in that regard were founded entirely on public safety principles, and I will encourage my honourable colleague to understand that and to respect our shared responsibility to make sure that our roads are safe at all times.

PESTICIDES

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Our government is committed to protecting families and children through tough new laws, including a new toxics reduction strategy to reduce pollution and protect Ontarians from toxic chemicals. One such enforcement measure was the introduction of the cosmetic pesticides ban. It has been nearly three years since this ban came into effect in Ontario.

Speaker, through you, would the Minister of the Environment please provide the House with an update on the implementation of the cosmetic pesticides ban since it was introduced?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Mr. Speaker, to protect Ontario families and, indeed, to improve our environment, our government brought in the cosmetic pesticides ban, and that came into effect on April 22, 2009. It's one of the toughest in the world.

It reduces the unnecessary risk of pesticides being used for cosmetic purposes. More than 90 pesticide ingredients are banned for cosmetic purposes. The ministry has visited over 1,100 retail pesticide vendors to conduct outreach and education and to assess compliance with the requirements of the ban since it was implemented.

Here's an interesting fact: Since the ban came into effect, concentrations of pesticides in urban water streams have decreased about 80%.

We will continue to focus on outreach and education, helping Ontarians learn how to care for their lawns and gardens using greener products and practices.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I would like to thank the minister for his answer.

You know, we lost this ban of cosmetic use of pesticides when I was on council in the city of Ottawa—we lost the vote on that, and we worked hard to do it.

Reducing the use, creation and release of toxic substances into the environment is crucial to protecting the health of Ontarians, especially our children. I understand that the Ministry of the Environment has been working collaboratively on a reporting system under the Toxics Reduction Act whereby companies have to track the amount of toxics they use.

Through you, Speaker, I wonder if the minister could elaborate on this reporting system.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'll certainly be pleased to do so. One significant initiative our government has taken is, of course, the Toxics Reduction Act. The act protects the health of the people and the environment by reducing the use and emission of toxic substances. It also aims to foster innovations in green chemistry and green engineering to make manufacturing and mineral processing safer.

The act is the cornerstone of Ontario's toxic reduction strategy, which is focused on managing and reducing the use and creation of toxic substances in order to protect the environment and human health, informing the public about toxics in their communities, and helping to ensure that Ontario is well positioned to compete in an emerging green global economy.

Since January 1, 2012, an anticipated 670 facilities are now subject to the act's reporting on toxic reduction planning regulation—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

MEMBERS' BIRTHDAYS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order, member from Cambridge.

Mr. Rob Leone: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg the indulgence of the House as I wish our youngest member of caucus, the member for Kitchener—Conestoga, a happy birthday.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm sure we obviously all offer the member a happy birthday.

A point of order from the member from Parkdale—High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I tried to get him to stay, but he ran away. Anybody who sees one of our older members of caucus today, from Trinity—Spadina—he's turning the new 40, let's just say that. Please wish him a happy birthday when you see him in the hall.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I think there's a magic moment in which all of us don't want to keep track of our birthdays, but we'll leave that alone for now.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands adjourned until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1140 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: It gives me great pleasure to introduce in the House today Daljeet Singh. He's the chairman for Dharam Parchar Committee, which is with the Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee in New Delhi, India. Also with Mr. Daljeet Singh, we have Ranbir Singh, who is the director of United Sikhs; and a good friend of mine, Harbaljeet Singh. I'd like to welcome them all to the Legislature today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We welcome our guests. Thank you for joining us.

Introduction of guests? The member from Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm anticipating that they will attend shortly. Arnold and Gail Kerry are constituents of mine. They're here to pay respects to their grandson Brady, who's one of the pages here. Brady is here and I'm sure he's waiting for them.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. The member from Burlington.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Mine aren't here yet either, but I'd like to welcome, from Burlington, June Rutherford, David Love, Charmaine Love, Penny Millar and Cal Millar, who should be showing up any minute.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

GARTH WEBB

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Mr. Speaker, it is with great sadness that I rise to mark the passing of one of my constituents earlier this week. Garth Webb, a D-Day veteran and true Canadian hero, died at Burlington's Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital on Tuesday, May 8, 2012, at the age of 93. I would like to extend heartfelt condolences to his wife, Lisa Cooper, his family, and his friends.

Garth's distinguished service to his country did not end on the battlefields of Europe. He went on to honour the memory of his countrymen as president and founder of the Juno Beach Centre in Normandy. Garth Webb came to that seaside town as a young man carrying the flame of freedom. He was a lieutenant with the 14th Field Regiment of the Royal Canadian Artillery when Canadian forces landed on D-Day, 1944.

More than half a century later, Garth was another sort of hero, the driving force behind the Juno Beach Centre project, which he championed right up to the opening on the 59th anniversary of D-Day.

The Juno Beach Centre is a place of living memory. It documents the war efforts made by all Canadians, civilian and military alike, at home and on the various front lines, during the Second World War.

Garth Webb's funeral will be held this Saturday in Burlington. On the same day, people will gather at the Juno Beach Centre to say goodbye to this remarkable man.

Garth Webb's bravery and leadership in peacetime, as in war, will forever stand as a testament to the towering character of his generation. He will be missed but will never be forgotten.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. John Vanthof: Mining is once again the driver of Ontario's economy. In Timiskaming-Cochrane, companies like Kirkland Gold, AuRico and Detour are creating thousands of jobs and adding hundreds of millions of dollars to the province's economy.

Forestry was also a booming industry, but booms once past are quickly forgotten, as are the people whose hard work made them happen, like seniors in Iroquois Falls, Kirkland Lake and Cochrane. In the mines and mills, their sweat built this province, but now, since the cancellation of the ONR passenger rail service, they will be left with no form of public transportation other than buses—maybe—to get to medical appointments or see their families.

Forgotten as well are the companies who use the freight side of the ONTC, companies like Kidd Creek, Resolute and Columbia. Their costs will rise, and the increased use of trucks will make our one two-lane highway even more treacherous.

Not only does the Liberal government believe that we do not deserve the same level of service as other Ontarians, but they are leaving us out of the loop completely regarding the destiny of our public transportation system. And now, MNDM and MTO have ordered the removal of signs protesting the sale of ONTC. Free speech is no longer allowed in the northern colonies.

The Premier needs to represent all Ontarians by including northerners in decisions that impact us, like the fate of our public transportation system. The north is more than gold and chromite. It is people who want to be proud Ontarians, not just a colony of the GTA and Bay Street.

JAMIESON LABORATORIES

Mrs. Teresa Piruzza: It is my pleasure today to rise to mark an important milestone for one of our most cherished corporate citizens. Today, Jamieson Laboratories, Canada's oldest and largest vitamin and natural health products manufacturer, celebrates 90 years of innovation.

Opening in 1922 as North America's first vitamin manufacturer, Jamieson cut its own path as a pioneer in the natural health care market.

The Jamieson name is also synonymous with integrity. The company's Windsor-based production facilities adhere to the rigorous 360 Pure Promise, a guarantee that every single product passes a minimum of 360 quality assurance steps. Jamieson continuously exceeds the safety standards set by both Health Canada and the US Food and Drug Administration. Jamieson is also a successful global brand, distributing more than 200 products in over 50 countries.

Jamieson deserves recognition for something else as well: its environmental leadership. Through the Jamieson Cares initiative, the company has a list of impressive green achievements: partnering with Essex Regional Conservation Authority, reducing manufacturing-related energy, and providing \$100,000 in grants to non-profit organizations to protect Canada's wilderness.

Speaker, as Canada's most trusted vitamin brand and a truly inspiring made-in-Ontario success story, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Jamieson Laboratories on its 90th anniversary.

ORCHARDS

Mr. John O'Toole: I rise today to alert members to a potential crisis in the agricultural community. Members no doubt will be familiar with a recent media report of as high as an 80% loss in some orchard products this year. The problem has been a very warm, early spring, followed by a severe frost that killed the buds and the blooms.

Over the past few weeks, I've taken the time to speak to the growers in my riding of Durham. They are indeed leaders in the industry: Kirk Kemp and Mike Gibson of Algoma Orchards; Fred and Sandy Archibald of Archibald Orchards and Estate Winery; Irwin and Alissa Smith of Ocala Orchards Farm Winery; Charles and Judy Stevens of Wilmot Orchards; Ted, Paul and Tami Watson of Watson Farms; Walter and Colleen Pingle of Pingle Orchards and Gardens; James Stevenson and Catherine McKay of Nature's Bounty; and William Hambly of Siloam Orchards.

As I said before, this is a very serious challenge. I have spoken to the Minister of Agriculture on this. I know that he's aware of the issue, and I would only expect that he has an escape plan.

In the few seconds I have left, I also want to take time to say that this is Catholic Education Week in Ontario, from May 6 to May 11. The theme this year is Walking in the Light of Christ. I wish the Catholic school boards in Ontario best wishes in Catholic Education Week in Ontario.

YWCA HAMILTON WOMEN OF DISTINCTION AWARDS

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm so proud and privileged to be able to stand on behalf of the women of distinction that happened in the Hamilton area last night: 60 women were nominated for their great community work in the service that they do in the city. It was the 36th annual Women of Distinction Awards held by the Hamilton YWCA. They put on a fabulous ceremony last night.

I would love to name the 10 women who were given the distinction award. It would be Lucene Charles, Jeanette Eby, Marni Flaherty, Loretta Hill-Finamore, Cheryl Jensen, Patricia Jordan, Mary Koziol, Jan Lukas, Krista Warnke and Lorna Zarembo. I congratulate these women for all of their great work, and I do congratulate all of the 60 nominees who were honoured to be just nominated for this position last night in Hamilton. I thank them for all the great work that they do in our community, because we know that without volunteers in our community, we would not get half the stuff done that needs to be done. So, congratulations to them all.

Thank you for giving me the time to speak on this matter today, Mr. Speaker.

HUMBER RIVER REGIONAL HOSPITAL

Mr. Mario Sergio: I'm proud to report that the new state-of-the-art and first fully digital hospital in North

America, Ontario's own Humber River Regional Hospital, is under construction and drawing praise and attention in our community and throughout the wider region.

I am proud to report to the House that the much-appreciated and most significant contribution to the Humber River Regional Hospital construction is from one of our own community's most active and recognized businesses. A few days ago, the Italian Canadian Savings and Credit Union stepped up with a \$1-million contribution to the construction of our new hospital. This incredible response to the needs of our community by the Italian Canadian Savings and Credit Union reflects the generosity and community spirit of this young institution. Their contribution of \$1 million represents IC Savings and Credit Union's strong desire to be a partner with local groups and organizations.

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To honour this most significant donation, Humber River Regional Hospital will name the emergency triage waiting area after IC Savings and Credit Union.

I send a heartfelt thanks to IC Savings and Credit Union and my congratulations to Humber River Regional Hospital. This speaks well for the community. I'm very happy, and I want to congratulate all of them involved.

COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARDS

Mr. Jim McDonell: Ontario's success depends so much on the initiative and hard work of our citizens and their commitments to their communities.

Recently, I had the pleasure to attend awards ceremonies in South Stormont and South Glengarry where they honoured their residents for outstanding work in the community.

In South Stormont, Alan Jodoin was honoured with the 2011 Fran Laflamme Volunteer of the Year Award. Alan has contributed countless hours over the past three decades as part of the OPP auxiliary. I have seen him at most events I attend as he's there to help out the community host their events.

In South Glengarry, the 2011 citizen of the year award was handed out to Rick and Lise Marvell. Although relatively new to our area, the two have had a huge impact on the community, always there when called upon. They're members of the Williamstown Fair board, the oldest fair in Ontario and Canada, St. Mary's Centre, Cornwall and Area New-Timers and much, much more.

In addition, South Glengarry also honoured—the youth merit award went to Kara Sinnott; entrepreneur of the year to the Village Diner; excellence in agriculture to Kerrydale Farms; community service award to Elisabeth and John Peters; business of the year to the Bob-T Tack Shop; and outstanding achievement award to the Quilt of Belonging.

These caring and energetic recipients are just a few of the many great examples of people who we see every day in communities across the province.

PHENYLKETONURIA

Mr. Bob Delaney: Phenylketonuria, commonly known as PKU, is a rare, inherited metabolic disease. People with PKU are missing an enzyme to break down protein in food, specifically one amino acid. Because this amino acid cannot be fully processed, it builds up in the blood and the excess amounts cross the blood-brain barrier. When this happens, brain damage and other neurological problems occur. The good news is that if caught early, people with PKU can live productive and fulfilling lives if they adhere to a special diet.

PKU affects about one baby in 12,000 in Canada. A baby with PKU does not show signs or symptoms until after irreversible harm has occurred.

Speaker, this is just one example of why Newborn Screening Ontario, Canada's most comprehensive newborn screening program, is such an important part of our health care system. PKU is just one of 28 inherited, treatable diseases that Newborn Screening Ontario checks all newborn babies in Ontario for.

I'm very pleased that joining us in the Legislature today are representatives of CanPKU, including the Baigorria family from Mississauga–Streetsville, who are here to meet with members to raise awareness of this rare genetic disorder.

PARRY SOUND SALVATION ARMY

Mr. Norm Miller: Last Saturday, I had the privilege of celebrating the 125th anniversary of the Parry Sound Salvation Army at a dinner and gala concert held at the Parry Sound Pentecostal Tabernacle.

One hundred and twenty-five years is a long time to serve the community. In my job as MPP, I see first-hand the good work the Salvation Army does in our community to help those in need with food, shelter, gifts at Christmas and emotional support. Over 125 years, their mission has not changed and their value to the community has not wavered.

They are currently the largest non-governmental provider of social services in the west Parry Sound district, and they have just come through one of their busiest Christmas seasons on record.

I was hosted by Captain Peter van Duinen, corps officer of the Salvation Army's Rainbow Country Church, and his spouse, Captain Leeann van Duinen. I also had the pleasure of meeting his parents, Lieutenant Colonel Dr. Susan van Duinen, Ontario central east divisional commander, and Lieutenant Colonel Dirk van Duinen, area commander for the greater Toronto area; the event was very much a family affair. The van Duinens demonstrate a level of devotion to public service and charity that is deeply humbling.

Much has changed since 1887. The invaluable service that the Parry Sound Salvation Army provides to those in need has not. I congratulate and thank Captain van Duinen and the Parry Sound Salvation Army on this very special occasion.

PRIVATE MEMBERS'
PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Mr. Milligan assumes ballot item number 51 and Mr. Nicholls assumes ballot item number 41, Mr. Barrett assumes ballot item number 46 and Mr. Pettapiece assumes ballot item number 54, and Mr. Yurek assumes ballot item number 43.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PKU AWARENESS MONTH ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LE MOIS
DE LA SENSIBILISATION
À LA PHÉNYLCÉTONURIE

Mr. Delaney moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 89, An Act to proclaim the month of May PKU Awareness Month / *Projet de loi 89, Loi proclamant le mois de mai Mois de la sensibilisation à la phénylcétonurie.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Bob Delaney: The bill proclaims the month of May in each year as PKU Awareness Month.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That is an exceptionally short statement, and I thank the member for doing so.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES

EDUCATION WEEK

SEMAINE DE L'ÉDUCATION

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Happy Education Week. I am very proud to stand up today to celebrate the students, teachers, staff and volunteers in our Ontario school system. They are doing excellent work, and as a result, we have made remarkable progress together.

Mr. Speaker, this is Education Week in Ontario, and there's no better time to recognize the transformational change we've seen in our education system over the past eight years because of our hard work with our partners in education.

Le système scolaire de l'Ontario compte parmi les meilleurs au monde, et nos élèves sont des leaders, tant au pays que dans le monde entier.

Ontario's school system is among the best in the world, and our students are leaders across the country and around the globe. Right now, the global economy is fraught with uncertainty. That's why the McGuinty government has seized every possible advantage to build a strong future for Ontarians.

Mr. Speaker, Walter Gretzky advised his son Wayne that a good hockey player plays where the puck is and a great hockey player plays where the puck is going to be. We've taken a similar approach to education in Ontario. With innovative new programs and supports, we have been giving students the skills they need to play where the puck is going to be. We don't just want our students to compete in the global knowledge economy; we want them to excel, because we know that education is the best investment we can make in the future prosperity of our province.

I want to take a minute to talk about some of the things that students in Ontario have accomplished.

Sixty-nine per cent of students are achieving the provincial standard in grades 3 and 6 combined. This is up one percentage point compared to 2009 and up 15 percentage points compared to 2003.

Le Programme pancanadien d'évaluation montre que les élèves de l'Ontario sont les seuls au pays qui ont dépassé la moyenne nationale dans les trois matières que sont les mathématiques, la lecture et les sciences.

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The Pan-Canadian Assessment Program, or PCAP, showed that Ontario students are the only ones in the country who achieved above the national average in math, reading and science, and our kids lead the country in reading. The PISA, an OECD assessment, confirmed this too. Ontario students are among the best readers in the world.

Ontario is also recognized as one of the few jurisdictions in the world where 92% of students are meeting or exceeding international standards, regardless of socioeconomic background or first language. That's a remarkable accomplishment.

Not only are our students doing better, but more students are graduating. The high school graduation rate has increased by 14 percentage points since 2003. That's an additional 93,000 students who have earned their high school diploma, and that's 93,000 more students moving on toward a successful future. That's about the same as the population of your hometown in Brantford, Mr. Speaker. Think about it: 93,000 students.

Et peut-être plus important encore, grâce à nos investissements et à nos partenariats, nous avons restauré la confiance du public dans l'éducation financée par les fonds publics.

And perhaps most importantly, as a result of the investments that we have made, even in these challenging economic times, we have rebuilt public confidence in publicly funded education.

But as far as we've come together, as much as we've achieved together, we know we have further to go. That's why, even in these tough economic times, we are main-

taining our investments in education. We are making choices that will preserve the gains we've made together. While the opposition would choose a different path, on this side we choose to invest in full-day kindergarten, to invest in smaller class sizes, to protect 20,000 teaching and support staff positions.

Nous faisons ces choix afin de préserver et de continuer à améliorer l'expérience en classe de ceux et celles qui importent le plus dans le système d'éducation : les élèves.

We're making these choices so that we can preserve and continue to improve the classroom experience for the people who matter most in the education system: our students.

Mr. Speaker, tomorrow morning I'll be in your home community celebrating Education Week at the opening of the Walter Gretzky school in Brantford, Ontario.

With that, I will conclude and say to all students, to all parents, to all teachers and to all those who work day in and day out in our education system, thank you. Happy Education Week.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Responses?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Thank you to the Minister of Education. I'm pleased to rise on behalf of our leader, Tim Hudak, and the Ontario PC caucus to voice our strong support for Education Week and applaud all those in this province who play a role in making our education system stronger and more innovative.

This year marks the 82nd anniversary of Education Week in Ontario, an event created to spotlight the paramount value of public education. This event is marked annually by school boards and schools across the province. It gives us—students, teachers, parents and policy-makers—a chance to celebrate teaching excellence and student achievement, to reaffirm our belief in the enduring value of the system and the ability of education to open up a world of possibilities. I'm confident that all of us understand this and can recognize the value in our own ridings.

In my own community, I have had a chance to visit many local schools and see this belief in action, to see that innovative spark, to see more compassionate hearts, to witness the bright and inspired face of our future.

Education is often about innovative teamwork, and that's true in my experience. We've recently seen four students from Kilbride in north Burlington—Chris Lyons, Jack Enders, Eddie Schmidt and Henry Boyd—be part of a team that grew from an Oakville-based after-school robotics program. That team recently travelled to the VEX Robotics world tournament in California, where they came out on top of a field of 500 high-school-level teams from around the planet—phenomenal.

Three students from Robert Bateman High School—Stacy Dante, Jordan McKeown and Jenny Allen—spent their March break in Kenya with a group of Milton District High School students creating the foundations for a new school for girls.

A class of grade 11 and 12 students at M.M. Robinson High School have had the opportunity to be part of the

Halton District School Board's electrical specialist high skills major program, a program that lets them explore the field of electrical engineering at Mohawk College STARRT campus in Stoney Creek.

These are all life-altering opportunities for our young people to move forward into the world of optimism and confidence.

Of course, we must also acknowledge that there is work to be done.

At the start of this week, People for Education released a report on special education showing that up to half of Ontario's schools are facing de facto board-imposed caps on assessments for special-needs students. I say de facto because some choose not to see the limits on assessments as a result of education policy but simply a by-product of bookkeeping. They don't see board-imposed assessment caps, but rather boards struggling with a funding allocation, one that limits the number of special-needs students able to get the assessment needed for them to take full advantage of this province's special education services. Schools report having as few as two assessments per year. Some special-needs students who have completed these assessments and who move to another city, another school board, have to begin the process all over again. Yet we also hear that nearly one in five elementary school students receive special education assistance. The stats show that a third or more of those are unassessed.

We will hear a lot of talk about building on our successes, but it is clear that there are some notable shortcomings in this government's educational policy. Even as it rolls out new education initiatives, it appears that this government is fumbling some of its core responsibilities. Rather than moving forward together, it is clear that there are many being left behind.

In meeting challenges such as these, we are truly grateful for the ongoing commitment of our education partners and the excellent work that they do: offering advice and encouragement as students face the challenges of today; supporting them as they prepare to take advantage of the opportunities of tomorrow; standing alongside them as they look forward to the exciting work of building our shared future.

During Education Week, I encourage all of us here and all Ontarians to thank someone in the education community for everything they bring to our schools.

This year's Catholic Education Week will be marked by many special events at all grade levels, including prayer, celebrations and service activities. The 2012 theme is *Walking in the Light of Christ*.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's my pleasure and my honour to rise and celebrate the existence of public education in Ontario. Without public education, our ability to run a sophisticated society, our ability to take part in a 21st-century economy would just not be there.

But I caution that much of what we value, much of what has been built over the past century and longer, is at risk. The staff, the people who work in our schools—teachers, education workers, administrators—face upheaval.

As you're well aware, Speaker, negotiations have been going on by YouTube between the Premier and education workers. They deserve better than that.

They're told that if we are to save many key features in our school system, they are the ones who are going to have to see rollbacks in wages and working conditions that, frankly, we have, as a society, recognized as necessary for the proper, smooth functioning of our schools.

As you might well imagine, Speaker, this group of people, told that they're looking at legislation down the road coming from this government if the government doesn't get what it wants at the bargaining table—this group is demoralized; it's angry. That is not a good thing for education. That is not a good thing for all those who depend—the parents and children—on a good education system.

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In Toronto and in other places, we're facing the closure of community schools. I want to note PCVS in Peterborough, which has been organizing consistently to organize support for a school that is full and is being told that it's going to be closed. I want to give credit to the students and the school community there, because they have organized for demonstrations across Ontario on May 12 to protect our community schools.

Speaker, as you well know, schools are the centres of communities all over this province. To close them down without looking for the options that would allow us to fill empty spaces with other public functions, to lose space that will mean that in the future students will be condemned to long bus rides and not have the option of a school they can walk to: That's a risk to our education system.

In Toronto, layoff notices have gone out and job redundancies have been announced. Education assistants who in classrooms help teachers deal with special-needs students who haven't had the assessments that they require—those teachers are going to face huge difficulties, and those education assistants, who have, at length and with great loyalty and commitment, addressed the needs of our children, are facing upheaval in their lives.

Speaker, our parents, our education workers and, above all, our children deserve better than this. Unfortunately, the time has now come for the school community, the teachers, the education workers and the students to mobilize once again to defend public education in this province. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements. It is now time for petitions. The member for Durham.

PETITIONS

WATER QUALITY

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Location has its privilege.

I'm pleased to read a petition from my riding of Durham. It reads as follows:

"Whereas, under the Health Protection and Promotion Act, Ontario regulation 319/08, public health inspectors are required to undertake risk assessments of small drinking water systems;

"Whereas many of these small drinking water systems are located in homes operating bed and breakfasts in rural Ontario," like my riding of Durham;

"Whereas private homes that are the sites of bed and breakfasts already have potable drinking water used by the homeowners and their families every day;

"Whereas many of these bed and breakfasts have established the quality of their drinking water through years of regular testing;

"Whereas these home-based businesses are facing high costs to comply with the new requirements of regulation 319/08;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Health"—and Environment—"amend Ontario regulation 319/08 to give the testing track record of a small drinking water system greater weight in the risk assessment process;

"Furthermore, we, the undersigned, ask that bed and breakfasts operated within a private home with a drinking water supply meeting all the requirements of a private home not be subject to regulation 319/08."

I'm pleased to sign and support this and present it to Manak, one of the pages.

SCHOOL NUTRITION PROGRAMS

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I have a petition here that's signed by the students of Dryden High School. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Healthy Foods for Healthy Schools Act has taken away students' right of free choice when it comes to dietary decisions, it is requested that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario review the act and consult all students of Ontario regarding the conditions and changes in the act to better meet our choices and desires;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Review the act with the consultation of students of Ontario. Make changes to the dietary restrictions and healthy education components of the act."

I support this and will affix my signature hereto.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I have a petition here to promote stopping bullying in our schools.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas all Ontario students have the right to a school environment where they feel safe, welcome and respected;

"Whereas school boards must take preventative measures against bullies and issue tougher consequences for those who participate in bullying;

"Whereas creating a safe and positive learning environment is an essential part of helping students succeed in school;

"Whereas schools across the province must support any group promoting understanding and respect for people of all sexual orientations and gender identities;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Bill 13, the Accepting Schools Act, 2012, be adopted so that students across Ontario are protected from the harmful effects of bullying and given every opportunity to succeed in school."

I agree with this petition, affix my signature and send it to the table via page Carley.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mrs. Julia Munro: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas citizens are concerned that contaminants in materials used as fill for pits and quarries may endanger water quality and the natural environment of the Oak Ridges moraine and the greenbelt;

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment has a responsibility and a duty to protect the sensitive areas of the greenbelt and Oak Ridges moraine;

"Whereas the government of Ontario has the lead responsibility to provide the tools to lower-tier government to plan, protect and enforce clear, effective policies governing the application and permitting process for the placement of fill in abandoned pits and quarries;

"Whereas this process requires clarification regarding rules respecting what materials may be used to rehabilitate or fill abandoned pits and quarries;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask that the Minister of the Environment initiate a moratorium on the clean fill application and permit process on the Oak Ridges moraine and the greenbelt until there are clear rules; and we further ask that the provincial government take all necessary actions to protect our water and prevent contamination of the Oak Ridges moraine and the greenbelt."

I've signed this and given it to page Jenny as I'm in complete agreement.

TOURISM

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I have another petition which reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas tourism is a vital contributor to the economy of northwestern Ontario, bringing hundreds of millions of dollars into the province's economy from other provinces and the United States, unlike other regions in the province whose target demographic is people who already reside in Ontario;

"Whereas northwestern Ontario's tourist economy has been under attack by government policies such as the cancellation of the spring bear hunt, the harmonized sales tax (HST), the strong Canadian dollar and difficulties passing through the Canada/United States border; and

"Whereas studies have shown that tourism in the northwest nets significantly more money per stay than other regions of the province, in part due to visitors frequenting historical sites, parks and roadside attractions that they learn about through travel information centres;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"To keep the travel information centres in Fort Frances, Kenora and Rainy River open permanently to ensure that northwestern Ontario maximizes the benefit of our tourist economy."

I support this petition and will give it to page Andrew to deliver.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I have a petition here from my riding of Ottawa Centre regarding domestic violence.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas all Ontarians have the right to a safe home environment;

"Whereas the government of Ontario works to reduce all barriers in place that prevent victims of domestic violence from fleeing abusive situations;

"Whereas the Residential Tenancies Act does not take into consideration the special circumstances facing a tenant who is suffering from abuse;

"Whereas those that live in fear for their personal safety and that of their children should not be financially penalized for the early termination of their residential leases;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Bill 22, the Escaping Domestic Violence Act, 2011 be adopted so that victims of domestic violence be afforded a mechanism for the early termination of their lease to allow them to leave an abusive relationship and find a safe place for themselves and their children to call home."

I agree with this petition, Speaker, affix my signature and send it to the table via page Dia.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Jim McDonell: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario through the Honourable Bob Chiarelli, Minister of Transportation, Minister of Infrastructure:

"Whereas the Ontario horse racing and breeding industry generates \$2 billion of economic activity, mostly in rural Ontario;

"Whereas more than 60,000 Ontarians are employed by Ontario's horse racing and breeding industry;

"Whereas 20% of the funds generated by the OLG slots-at-racetracks program is reinvested in racetracks

and the horse racing and breeding industry, while 75% is returned to the government of Ontario," and a further 5% to the municipality;

"Whereas the OLG slots-at-racetracks program generates \$1.3 billion a year for health care and other spending, making it the most profitable form of gaming in the province for OLG;

"Whereas the government has announced plans to cancel the slots-at-racetracks program, a decision that will cost the government \$1.1 billion per year and threatens more than 60,000 jobs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Call on the government of Ontario to protect the \$1.1 billion of revenue the government received annually because of the OLG slots-at-racetracks program; direct OLG to honour the contracts with racetracks and protect the horse racing and breeding industry by continuing the OLG slots-at-racetracks revenue-sharing program."

I agree with the petition and will be signing it.

1340

DOG OWNERSHIP

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas currently the law takes the onus off of owners that raise violent dogs by making it appear that violence is a matter of genetics; and

"Whereas the Dog Owners' Liability Act does not clearly define a pit bull, nor is it enforced equally across the province, as pit bulls are not an acknowledged breed;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly passes Bill 16, Public Safety Related to Dogs Statute Law Amendment Act, 2011, into law."

This will save the lives of thousands of dogs. I couldn't agree more. I'm going to sign it and give it to Dia to be delivered to the table.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker. This is my lucky day today, getting picked here every single time.

I have hundreds of signatures I've received from Jer's Vision in support of Bill 13, the Accepting Schools Act.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas all Ontario students have the right to a school environment where they feel safe, welcome and respected;

"Whereas school boards must take preventive measures against bullies and issue tougher consequences for those who participate in bullying;

"Whereas creating a safe and positive learning environment is an essential part of helping students succeed in school;

"Whereas schools across the province must support any group promoting understanding and respect for people of all sexual orientations and gender identities;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That we believe in supporting all students who experience bullying in our schools. We feel the Accepting Schools Act, Bill 13, will make a real difference in the lives of youth in our community, especially LGBTQ youth. We support the Accepting Schools Act, Bill 13, and ask that this assembly support it as well."

I agree with this petition, affix my signature and send it to the table with page Sabrina.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I have a petition that reads:

"Whereas the report from Ontario's Auditor General on the province's air ambulance service, Ornge, found a web of questionable financial deals where tens of millions of taxpayers' dollars have been wasted and public safety compromised; and

"Whereas Ornge officials created a 'mini-conglomerate' of private entities that enriched former senior officers and left taxpayers on the hook for \$300 million in debt; and

"Whereas government funding for Ornge climbed 20% to \$700 million, while the number of patients it airlifted actually declined; and

"Whereas a subsidiary of Ornge bought the head office building in Mississauga for just over \$15 million and then leased it back to Ornge at a rate 40% higher than fair market rent; and

"Whereas the Liberal Minister of Health completely failed in her duty to provide proper oversight of Ornge; and

"Whereas the latest scandal follows the eHealth boondoggle where over \$2 billion in health dollars were wasted; and

"Whereas current committees of the Legislature have no ability to subpoena witnesses," and whereas students are diligently watching in the east public gallery;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government of Ontario immediately appoint a special all-party select committee to investigate the scandals surrounding Ornge."

I affix my signature in full support.

AIR-RAIL LINK

Mr. Jonah Schein: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas diesel trains are a health hazard for people who live near them;

"Whereas more toxic fumes will be created by the 400 daily trains than the car trips they are meant to replace;

"Whereas the planned air-rail link does not serve the communities through which it passes and will be priced beyond the reach of most commuters;

"Whereas all major cities in the world with train service between their downtown core and the airport use electric trains;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario stop building the air-rail link for diesel and move to electrify the route immediately;

"That the air-rail link be designed, operated and priced as an affordable transportation option between all points along its route."

I support this petition. I sign my name to it, and I give it to page Manak to bring to you.

CELLULAR TRANSMISSION EQUIPMENT

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a petition signed by some people in my community. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the operation of cellular commercial transmission equipment on new or existing cell towers has been proposed near residential areas in Oakville and other communities around the province;

"Whereas Industry Canada has ultimate authority to approve the location of cellular communications transmission equipment under the federal Radiocommunication Act;

"Whereas the province of Ontario has no jurisdiction in the placement of cell communications equipment or services;

"Whereas many area residents and local elected officials have expressed concerns with the location due to its proximity to residential areas;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario request that the government of Canada review the siting of cellular commercial communications transmission equipment in residential areas; and

"That the province of Ontario request that the government of Canada place a moratorium on the installation of cellular commercial communication transmission equipment on new or existing towers within 1,000 metres of residential homes until an improved separation distance is established by the federal government."

Speaker, I agree with this, will sign it and will send it down to you with Constantine.

RURAL SCHOOLS

Mr. John O'Toole: Given that this is Education Week and that the Minister of Education is here and the

former minister is here as well, this petition is appropriate.

"Whereas Cartwright High School is an important part of the Blackstock and area community; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised in the 2007 election that he would keep rural schools open when he declared that, 'Rural schools help to keep communities strong'; and

"Whereas schools in rural areas are community places;"—we agree—

"Whereas Cartwright students, families, friends and staff have created an effective learning experience that emphasizes a community atmosphere, individual attention and full participation by students in school activities; and

"Whereas the framework of rural schools is different from urban schools and therefore deserves to be governed by a rural school policy; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government found \$12 million to keep school swimming pools open in Toronto but hasn't found any money to keep rural schools open in communities such as Blackstock;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That" Premier Dalton McGuinty and Education Minister Laurel Broten "support the Cartwright High School community and suspend plans to close Cartwright High School" as well as PCVS "under the school board's accommodation review process until the province develops a rural school policy that respects the value of smaller schools in the rural communities of Ontario."

I'm pleased to sign it in support, because I do believe in this, and present it to William.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

ENDANGERED SPECIES AMENDMENT ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES ESPÈCES EN VOIE DE DISPARITION

Ms. Scott moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 73, An Act to amend the Endangered Species Act, 2007 / Projet de loi 73, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les espèces en voie de disparition.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to rise today to speak on behalf of my private member's bill, Bill 73, An Act to amend the Endangered Species Act.

Since I assumed my role as PC critic for the Ministry of Natural Resources, I've had the opportunity to meet with a wide range of stakeholders regarding the broad and diverse aspects of all of the MNR mandate. Whether

talking to representatives of the agriculture, forestry, aggregate, municipal, fish and wildlife, land development or outdoor recreation sectors, in every case, a common theme emerges: The Endangered Species Act is not working. It is not protecting endangered species as it should because it has failed to engage those people in the private sector whose involvement is critical to making it work.

In a 2010 paper prepared by the George Morris Centre, it was stated that "in order to improve conservation efforts and protect endangered species, action by private landowners and managers is critical, and finding ways to create private incentives to protect this public resource is fundamental."

Instead of embracing this dynamic, the effect of the application of the Endangered Species Act by MNR has been to circumvent it. I want to improve the process for implementation and administration of the act by bringing some practicality to it. It is not being administered in a fair, balanced and open way, causing both financial and personal hardship for many individuals, organizations and businesses.

I've heard repeated stories of people being afraid to report the discovery of an endangered species because of the punitive restrictions which may be imposed upon them—for example, the butternut tree. The discovery of a butternut tree or what you think might be a butternut tree, which is designated as endangered, was reported to the MNR. MNR officials have taken almost a year to render a decision on how to proceed. One can only imagine, if a single butternut tree takes the MNR this much time, how long other individuals and businesses impacted by similar situations have to wait for decisions. There are easy tools out there but, again, it's the fear of the implementation. It's very confusing for people.

1350

We've heard from Ducks Unlimited, whose volunteers went in and built a dam to preserve a wetland, which is the type of work that this great organization has been doing for decades. Their efforts were so successful that when they went back in a period of time later to do the repair on the dam, they were advised by MNR officials that they couldn't do that because there were now endangered species present. They created the habitat so that the endangered species would be there. They need to be recognized, not prohibited from doing further work. You get this frustration built up with more and more stories.

In a letter from Tracy Hennekam, president of the Kawartha Lakes Real Estate Association, she said, "Our members are not opposed to protecting our endangered wildlife, flora and fauna. However, we want to ensure that this is done in an open, responsible and accountable way." So many of the concerns which were repeatedly expressed pertain to the lack of transparency in decisions made by MNR. Currently, there's no requirement for MNR to make its analysis publicly available. So when the Committee on the Status of Species at Risk in Ontario, called COSSARO, adds a species, the Ministry

of Natural Resources is required to ensure that a recovery strategy is prepared for each endangered and threatened species and that it be posted to the Species at Risk in Ontario List.

Subsection 11(12) of the current act permits the minister to consider social and economic factors in reaching his or her opinion as to whether something is feasible. Similarly in subsection 12, the minister again may consider social and economic factors when developing management plans for species of special concern. Bill 73, the bill we're discussing today, amends both of those subsections to make it mandatory that the minister must assess the social and economic factors before a decision can be rendered.

Cynthia Robinson, of the Ontario Stone, Sand and Gravel Association, says, "Consideration of economic and social factors is critical for the province of Ontario in relation to how endangered species may affect business in the aggregate industry and other land-resource-based industries."

Joe Vaccaro, the chief operating officer of the Ontario Home Builders' Association, wrote, "The Ontario Home Builders' Association supports the policy measures in ... Bill 73 to amend the Endangered Species Act. Home builders are committed to species and habitat protection that is balanced with the broader social and economic factors and implemented to complement established provincial policy objectives to provide certainty for landowners."

Michael Nitz, chair of the Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce, wrote, on behalf of his 1,100 members, "Far too often, environmental policies are evaluated in isolation from their economic and social impacts ... including the loss of economic development and employment opportunities."

The bill also amends subsection 56 of the act, governing public notice. This bill would require the minister to post proposals on Ontario's environmental registry for a minimum of 90 days. Today, the posting period is only for 30 days. Everyone we talked to felt very strongly that 90 days was a much fairer and more appropriate posting time. It gave people time to realize it's there and for reactions and feedback to occur.

The posting would be required to include a preliminary assessment of the environment and the social and economic consequences of implementing this proposal—again a connection that is missing, as we see it. By requiring that all the announcements be made publicly available and allow public comment, the ministry administration of the Endangered Species Act would be more open and transparent, which is what we are consistently hearing is needed.

Currently, when the minister considers the granting of an exception permit, his decision must include a requirement that even by granting the permit, he is of the opinion that it will be to the overall benefit of the species. However, the "overall benefit" clause is ambiguous and subjective, which can present serious problems for many individuals and small businesses.

A perfect example is the case of the bobolink, a bird that winters in South America and summers in southern Ontario, where nesting occurs. In southern Ontario, the bobolink has become the symbol for farmers and other stakeholders as an example of how the Endangered Species Act isn't working. Bobolinks nest in hayfields during the period when the hay reaches its optimum nutrient value as a source of food for livestock. So shutting down hay harvesting in this period to accommodate the nesting bobolinks would be devastating to the agriculture community all across southern Ontario, in terms of the growers, their suppliers, the employers, their customers and the livestock which depend on this food source.

The bobolink has resulted in a great deal of angst and uncertainty for farmers, and I'm sure everyone in the Legislature who has a rural community has heard of it, because their livelihoods depend on the seasonal harvest of hay. Farmers are potentially facing a major crisis, including the loss of jobs. So when Ontario families are urging the government to create jobs, this is not the way to respond.

The Ministry of Natural Resources did buy themselves some time by declaring a three-year agricultural moratorium for the bobolink—it wouldn't be political, I couldn't imagine—but it did, thereby, permit farmers to continue their operations.

However, unless this situation is addressed and a permanent solution developed, the minister's options will be limited. He can order the shutting down of the hay harvesting in Ontario to accommodate the nesting period of the bobolink. He could keep extending the moratorium, but that's not really a solution; it's applying a band-aid and putting off a proper solution to another day when someone else can deal with it. Farmers could apply for an exemption permit, which the ministry actually calls an "overall benefit" permit because of its requirement that there would still be an overall benefit to the species. But in the case of hay harvesting, that would simply not be realistic, as some nests would inevitably be destroyed, to some degree, during the harvesting process.

Since the Endangered Species Act was passed in 2007, MNR advises that a total of 4,000 applications have been received for overall benefit permits. During the same period of time, a total of only 50 permits have actually been granted, which effectively illustrates how difficult it is to prove overall benefit.

Another option that would provide a more permanent solution would be to delete the overall benefit clause from the act, and this is the option I am proposing in Bill 73. Elimination of this clause would give the minister much more flexibility and discretion to grant permits where they are warranted, as a result of a detailed analysis of the social and economic considerations, which we're asking that they must do. So even without the overall benefit clause, the act still contains sufficient provisions to minimize negative impacts—there's a lot of tools in the tool box.

Bill 73 is an attempt to introduce a degree of balance and accountability that is currently lacking. My office has

received a multitude of letters and emails of support. For example, an open letter posted on the website for NOMA, the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association, has this to say: "We offer our full support to this legislation, which we trust will be unanimously supported by members of the Ontario Legislature."

Mark Caron, president of the Fort Frances Chamber of Commerce, wrote to say: "This letter is the unanimous endorsement of the amendments proposed to the Endangered Species Act ... we applaud Ms. Scott's efforts to adjust the legislation to better balance the environmental and economic needs."

The amendments to the Endangered Species Act that I have included in Bill 73 are not radical, nor are they one-sided. They're a realistic attempt to address many of the major concerns that have been repeatedly raised by stakeholders and individuals who live every day with the impacts of the MNR's administration of what is a flawed piece of legislation.

Bill 73 would force the ministry to consider the social and economic impact their actions would have on the lives of real people. It would force the ministry to consider job losses and the loss of land use. The bill would also require that the analysis be made public for a reasonable period of time, and that those directly impacted would be given an opportunity to review the data and provide their comments back to the minister.

Mr. Speaker, we are all concerned about protecting our endangered fauna and flora, but we need to ensure that this is done in an open, responsible, accountable and balanced way. It isn't balanced when thousands of farms could be threatened, resulting in a significant reduction in food production and greater reliance on importing food. It isn't balanced if forestry is further eroded to the point that Ontario needs to import lumber from other jurisdictions. It isn't balanced if in order to achieve the objective, the onus is on the private landowner or operator to bear the economic and financial burden of the implementation.

Farmers, families, municipalities and businesses must be part of the decision-making process. Only through a well-balanced approach can the act really work.

I believe that this bill goes a long way toward that goal. I would urge my colleagues from all parties to consider it and to support it so that we can move forward and actually protect the groups involved and protect the endangered species. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity.

1400

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I rise today to speak in support of this bill. Speaker, the Endangered Species Act is a deeply flawed piece of legislation, no matter which way you look at it. It fails to accomplish its goals of protecting endangered species and their habitat, and the public have lost faith in it, if they ever had faith in it to begin with.

In the north, there was widespread opposition to the Endangered Species Act, as municipalities, First Nations, chambers of commerce and industry organizations alike spoke out against it. In their wisdom, these organizations saw the potential problems coming down the pipe, and they sent a loud and clear message, but they were ignored when it was passed.

The failure to consult and listen is in the past. We need to put aside any differences we have and move forward, and the best way to move forward for endangered species, the people of Ontario, the environment and industry is to pass today's amendment. Very simply, we need to do the right thing.

Too often, this House becomes consumed with grandstanding, where the image is more important than the action. We have people in this House who are more concerned about their political lives or their party than about doing what is right, and when that occurs, it is a shameful state of affairs.

Whether it's grandstanding over Ornge or other scandals, needlessly adjourning debate on important issues to prove a political point, or selectively reading passages of letters and correspondence to make it seem like there is support for your bill when there really isn't, in the six months that I've been here, I've seen a lot of actions that have sold the people of this province short.

We are here to serve the public and represent their views and their aspirations, not to have a shouting match over which political party has done this or done that. There's so much focus on passing blame or getting credit that it appears that many MPPs have lost sight of why they're here, and that's to make the right decisions. Passing this amendment is the right decision.

Some who ignore what is actually happening may decry this amendment as an attack on the environment and the Endangered Species Act, because they're more concerned with the headlines than the substance.

The Endangered Species Act, as it currently stands, is hurting endangered species, because while the option is open to consider the socioeconomic factors, in practice this is not happening. Instead, what's happening is people are not reporting endangered species. They are terrified because they know if they do, the Ministry of Natural Resources will swoop in and declare their area off limits. Rather than work with the property owner, they will say, "You can't touch this place."

We heard from my colleague who introduced the bill of the travesty of what happened with Ducks Unlimited, where Ducks Unlimited, a conservation group, was told that their conservation project had to stop because an endangered species was nesting in their area. You would think that that would be a benefit to the endangered species and the environment. Nevertheless, this is just an example of how this act is not being implemented properly. There's no wonder why the people in this province have lost faith in this act.

So what happens when an endangered species shows up on the scene? Rather than it being seen as a blessing or a miracle, hard-working families are left to worry

about the future of their businesses, such as farms or tourist operations. Instead of working with the MNR to find a co-operative solution that allows the businesses to coexist peacefully with the endangered species, people are being forced to pick between putting food on the table and saving the species. I would hope that I don't have to tell any of you what they're deciding. It's a pretty grim choice to make. And it's happening that some people are using phrases such as "shooting, shovelling and shutting up," and that's not helping anybody, especially not the endangered species that this act was intended to support and protect.

That's the problem, and that's what this private member's bill is trying to sort out. I'm not going to allow partisan politics to get in the way of the right thing. I congratulate and thank the member from the PC Party for bringing this bill forward, because it opens the door to dialogue and that's what we need.

We need a government that's willing to work with the property owners and the businesses to find solutions, not dictate closures. We need a government that's willing to enter into a dialogue about compensation. We need to give the public confidence that if an endangered species shows up on their farm or at their tourist operation or even at their home, they can call and report it, that they can work with the government to find positive solutions, and that's what this amendment does.

Even the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario has stated very clearly that while well intentioned, the Endangered Species Act is not being properly implemented. The amendment isn't putting business or industry ahead of the environment; it's simply saying that all parties need to be included in the dialogue.

The fact is, if we really care about endangered species, we will make this positive amendment that will allow businesses and families in the north and across the province to buy into the act. This bill needs to pass.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Colle: As you know, Mr. Speaker, the Conservative opposition all voted against the Endangered Species Act, so what we have here before—

Mr. John O'Toole: He cannot impugn motive—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Can you wait till I recognize you? I've told you this more than once.

The member of Durham on a point of order.

Mr. John O'Toole: I would request that the member not impugn motive or assign—speak to the issues and speak on your behalf. Don't bother telling me what I believe. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): That's not a point of order. The member for Eglinton—Lawrence, you have the floor.

Mr. Mike Colle: I know the truth hurts, Mr. Speaker. They voted against the act, they are still opposed to the act, and this is another attempt to undermine the Endangered Species Act.

I'm shocked that the NDP would stand up and say they would support this, because this basically kills the Endangered Species Act, because what it does is it says very clearly here that "The minister shall consider social and economic factors in reaching his or her" decisions. It basically tells the minister that before you decide whether or not a species should be protected, they have to weigh the economic and social factors. In any situation, the developers are going to come in and tell you, "We can't put up our development because there's the Endangered Species Act." The poor developer is going to lose how many millions of dollars. "Sorry, there's a socioeconomic impact. The species doesn't count; it can't be protected." That's what this bill says. It's quite plain and clear that this—and I know that—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Oxford, come to order, please.

Mr. Mike Colle: I know it's difficult for them to listen to the other side, but I have the right to play the other side. I just warn people that that is what this bill does, and if you look at the Conservative record on this and if you look at what they're saying in their constituencies, they don't think this bill is needed. They've tried to undermine it. This is an attempt to continue to undermine it. All we're talking about—there are 30,000 species. This only protects 200, and they make it sound as if the world's coming to an end because of the 200 protected species out of 30,000. That's what they're trying to say.

Certainly in any piece of legislation there are difficult challenges to ensure that the legislation is implemented properly. MNR is out there constantly talking to people, visiting sites, trying to deal with the new legislation. In fact, the minister has said that he is looking at a few adjustments to make the bill more flexible to deal with the reality of the bill since it was passed in 2007. He has those amendments in place that will help deal with some of the realities of the legislation.

I think we need to look at where this bill is coming from. The intentions are basically to weaken and gut a strong piece of legislation which is necessary if we're going to protect our natural environment, because if the species are gone—you know that the natural environment lives hand in hand with our endangered species, and the tragedy is that we are too sure to write off any attempt to ameliorate the situation. There are ways—and MNR is working with ways—to deal with development pressures, to deal with business pressures, to deal with—you know, it's just like the aggregates act; the same thing. You've got to protect the environment, yet there are industrial operations that are needed. So you have to find a middle point. That's what the act has done, to try and find that reasonable point while protecting those 200 species that are at risk.

So I urge people not to support this bill, which basically guts a very progressive piece of environmental protection that almost everybody supported in this province and is something that is needed. Let's fix the act

but let's not destroy it with this kind of bill, which basically guts it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

1410

Mr. Michael Harris: I'm pleased to take this opportunity to speak to my colleague's private member's bill, an Act to amend the Endangered Species Act. I know the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock has put an immense amount of work into this bill, meeting with members of the public and numerous stakeholders, including those from the agricultural, forestry, land development, and hunting and fishing sectors. Based on her extensive research and consultation, the member has proposed a bill that I think makes much-needed changes to increase government accountability and transparency under the Endangered Species Act.

Importantly, Bill 73 would make it mandatory for the Ministry of Natural Resources to fully consider and assess the social and economic factors associated with developing action plans for species and habitat protection. Currently, the Endangered Species Act only says that these factors "may" be considered.

How can new proposals go forward without any consideration of how it will impact the public and/or businesses? Clearly, leaving this out of the equation does not serve Ontario well. The least government can do when its actions affect the very livelihood of Ontarians is to ensure that these factors are fully recognized and taken into account before a decision is implemented.

The government also has to let the public know about its findings. It's not enough to look at the potential effects of a proposal and then tell Ontarians, "Trust us. We know what's best." Ontarians need the tools to make their own decisions. They need access to all relevant information regarding these proposals so they can provide their comments.

Bill 73 delivers that ability to the public by requiring the Ministry of Natural Resources to post the proposal on the Environmental Bill of Rights registry 90 days before designating an area as an endangered species habitat. Currently, the law requires proposals to be posted for just 30 days, giving interested individuals and groups little time to comment. Under Bill 73, however, residents have more time to assess proposals and more information to consider in the notice. This includes a clear statement detailing the objective of the proposal, an assessment of the environmental, social and economic consequences of implementing the proposal, and an explanation of why the proposal achieves the regulation's environmental objectives.

The Endangered Species Act, as it stands now, does not require the government to disclose how it has arrived at its decision to designate new habitat areas for endangered or threatened species.

Again, this bill is about accountability and transparency. It takes the logical steps forward that the government has clearly failed to take.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Davenport.

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'm pleased to stand and speak to this private member's bill. Protecting species is in all of our interests. We rely on the health of our ecosystem for survival.

The Endangered Species Act was set in place as a process to identify and protect species based on scientific assessment. It is far from perfect. There have been long delays in the development of species recovery plans, and the government wants to further delay action. The Ministry of Natural Resources has been inadequately resourced to move ahead with species protection, and the environment commissioner himself has been clear that more resources are necessary for this to go forward properly.

The "stick" approach rather than the "carrot" approach means that farmers and landowners are too often penalized for trying to protect species, and they're not helped to do so. The NDP has been a strong supporter of recognizing the contributions that farmers and landowners make to species protection and ecological sustainability through programs like alternative land use services.

The NDP is absolutely committed to helping companies minimize costs and protect jobs by using the full range of measures under the ESA, including screening tools, offsetting of incremental costs, other incentives, and selective exemptions. But we will not compromise environmental protection. I'm proud of my party's commitment to the environment: setting up the Environmental Bill of Rights; standing up for transit; fighting against urban sprawl; and being the first party to raise climate change at the federal level.

Changes to the Endangered Species Act need to be carefully thought out. It should be noted that flexibility already exists in the act. The minister can already consider social and environmental factors when determining the feasibility of species recovery plans. So we really don't need to make it a requirement that the minister must consider social and environmental factors in all cases; we don't need to change this. Does this undermine the science-based focus on protecting endangered species in the development of recovery plans? Does the already underfunded MNR even have the administrative capacity to undertake social and economic reviews for every application?

This bill also proposes removing the test that proposed activities provide for an overall benefit for species. It argues that this test obstructs economic development. But again, there's already flexibility here. The ministry already has the power to exempt activities that don't meet this test. Isn't it better to test and exempt than not to test at all? The act may not be perfect, but it should be recognized that groups are working hard to make it work. For example, forest plans have been developed by environmentalists and forest companies and First Nations peoples to protect caribou while ensuring access to wood supply and to support jobs in the north.

We need to make the ESA better. We need to make sure that northerners have a greater say over the natural resource base on which much of the northern economy is

based. We need to reduce the costs to forest companies associated with the Endangered Species Act. And yes, we must make it easier to protect species. But we can't pretend that there will never be any costs involved in doing so.

By requiring the assessment of social and environmental factors in the development of species protection plans, there is a danger that the priority given to science-based species protection will be compromised and plans will be informed as much by social and economic considerations as by species protection. This could put at risk even the small progress that has already been made, and it could do a great disservice to Ontarians, both current and future generations.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: I agree with all the members opposite who have spoken that we do need to dialogue about the Endangered Species Act—absolutely. Are there opportunities for improvement? Yes.

I want to remind those members and this House that our government has already proposed changes to the Endangered Species Act through Bill 55, also known as our budget. We believe these changes provide the necessary balance of endangered species protection, while at the same time reducing red tape and providing greater certainty for business. Unlike the MPP from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock's bill, which seeks to alter the intent of the ESA in a way that undermines protection for our species at risk, our changes ensure Ontario's ESA continues to be a North American leader in protecting native species. Our amendments provide more streamlining and help keep us as a leader in protecting endangered species.

I'm frustrated, because we talk about working together, we put forward some very important proposals and elements in the budget, and here we are with yet another private member's bill on the heels of some very good analysis and suggestions put forth in our budget. I don't feel we're working together effectively by doing this. In fact, I would suggest and agree with my colleague from Eglinton-Lawrence that what's coming forward is an act that's going to gut the ESA.

I'm proud of the legislation we have, but at the same time I recognize there are opportunities to improve it. We are proposing a number of things to reduce unnecessary permitting, by focusing on permitting requirements on areas that pose the greatest risk to species. We've demonstrated our consideration of social and economic factors, and the overall benefit permits are one way we've been achieving and promoting protection and recovery of species at risk and their habitats.

We have many exciting things going on in Ontario, Speaker, including, for example, the extension of the 407 eastward into my riding of Pickering-Scarborough East and beyond. We're committed to that as a government. Absolutely, that's good for jobs and the economy. At the same time, the ESA provides for the protection of species.

In the example of the 407, the overall benefit permit is about collection and propagation from disease-resistant trees to repopulate and improve the overall health of species. We're talking about, in this case, butternut and American chestnut trees. This can be done together. We can protect the species and at the same time invest and build in the 407, invest in jobs and the economy, and make it work.

I'm very disappointed that our budget considerations aren't being considered going forward. I wish and hope that we could find a way to work more closely together on this, because I don't want to see us lose our status as a North American leader in this.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

1420

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm very pleased to have a short opportunity to join in the debate today on changes to the Endangered Species Act, and I certainly commend the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock for bringing this important legislation forward.

Back in 2007, I am embarrassed to say that I supported the Endangered Species Act, and I kind of feel like I was duped at the time by the government and also by some of the environmental lobby groups.

I think the changes being proposed today make a lot of sense in that we're trying to bring in some—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'm going to run an ad in your riding on the radio.

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you for that, member from Timmins-James Bay.

I think that when you get out on the ground and you talk to people in the forestry sector or the building sector or whatever sector, there are all sorts of problems with the Endangered Species Act the way it stands.

In 2007, when the Endangered Species Act was passed, the government promised the Ontario Forestry Coalition, a group that includes municipal leaders, First Nations communities, chambers of commerce, labour and industry, that the new legislation would complement the existing regulatory framework. They were promised that in section 55, to be precise, would be recognition that the Crown Forest Sustainability Act already protects species at risk and already achieves the objectives set out in the Endangered Species Act.

In response to concerns raised by stakeholders from the forestry industry, then-Minister David Ramsay stated, "If Bill 184 is passed by the Legislature, it is our intention to put forward a regulation that will exempt forest management plans from the prohibitions in dealing with species at risk. This regulation will be based on the recognition of the efficacy of FMPs in addressing endangered and threatened species." Unfortunately, this promise was not kept.

The minister—I would say, under directions from the Premier's office and Environmental Defence and Rick Smith—turned his back on this commitment and hit the forestry industry with a lot of red tape that overrode the existing framework, removed vast tracts of land from

potential development and decimated economic opportunities for countless northern communities.

Northern Ontario demands changes to the Endangered Species Act. To this day, the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association continues to press for recognition in the ESA that its primary objectives are met through the Crown Forest Sustainability Act and its required forest management plans. NOMA has lent support to this private member's bill.

In a letter to the Premier dated July 3, 2008, and signed by over 540 individuals, the Ontario Forestry Coalition stated, "Since September 30, 2004, 16 species have been newly assessed as, or have had their previous status elevated to, threatened or endangered. All 16 of these species are located in southern Ontario. MNR information shows that the single greatest threat to these species is development activities and permanent land conversion. Not one of these species is linked to forest management on crown land managed by the forest industry. Not one of these species is located in the boreal forest."

I'm out of time; I'm sorry. I've got lots more I'd like to say.

These are positive changes that will make a difference, and I support the member with this private member's bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I'm pleased to stand and to identify that I will not be supporting this bill. The Endangered Species Act is there for a particular purpose: to support species during the process of business development, regardless of where that development takes place. The idea is to protect the species and to do so by working with the communities. I can give you an example of a number of instances where permission was given for cankered butternut trees to be taken down and to be replaced by additional trees, because I signed them myself.

I can speak to you about Pelee Island, where in fact we worked with the aggregate industry on Pelee Island to make sure that a particular snake continued to have its home and at the same time the pit was enabled to expand, and it did so. Also, at the same time, Ontario Nature purchased additional lands. We all worked together to create a space for that particular species.

Identification was made around the Kawarthas and Haliburton area. The stewardship programs that go on in Haliburton and Kawartha are phenomenal, and they are based by people who care about ensuring that shorelines are protected and so are species protected.

Yes, there's no question that there are challenges, but working together, you can and do overcome those challenges, and there is a significant, significant number of opportunities that I could tell you about where we did work together. Did it mean that things took some time? Absolutely. But it took a long time for that species to evolve in the first place, and we have absolutely no authority in this good world of ours to eradicate it in a heartbeat because of a business opportunity.

What we need to do is to be able to work with—and we have lots of examples where we have done that. A very large mall that went in in London, Ontario: We worked with that particular developer to ensure that the species, in fact, was protected. We did this for another with a particular salamander, and again, the species was protected. We've done it with the snake; the species was protected, the buildings went ahead.

There are many examples. Tembec in the north, for example, has an excellent caribou plan that it's had in place for many years. It has been a leader in the development of caribou plans. If Tembec can do it, other companies can do it. There's absolutely no reason—so you either fundamentally believe that protection of species comes first and you work together to protect it or you have a philosophical perspective that's different. On this side of the House, our biodiversity is essential to us. It's the air we breathe, it's everything that's all around us, and the protection of those species.

I worked with a number of farmers throughout a number of areas in middle Ontario, where they were looking at alternative crops and at the same time encouraging species to thrive because they were at the point of being extinct. They needed those species for their crop production. Like most things, there's always a way if there's a will. If you want to protect a bird, whether it's a bobolink or a little piping plover, then you can if you choose to do so. We choose to do so on this side of the House because it's the most important thing to do: to be able to protect our species so that, in the future, we have a sustainable world in which we live.

It's actually part of our responsibility and our obligation. Yes, at times it may be onerous to do, but it is the right thing to do.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: I want to first make it clear, on Bill 73, that the history of that bill on the endangered species is that this bill is a culmination from Ms. Scott, the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, after a wide range of consultations with stakeholders. This is about doing the right thing, not the wrong thing.

Can I say that, of the experts who she talked with, one of whom I have a lot of regard for is Denis F. Cheff, who's the general manager of the Hearst forest station. This is what he said: "I commend you for initiating this courageous improvement in the Endangered Species Act." This is a person who works with our environment. He went on to say that the Endangered Species Act "is environmentally unsophisticated legislation. A major fault is that it does not recognize sustainability. Sustainable outcomes are only possible"—these are his words—"when environmental, social and economic implications are fully addressed," which they are not. In many respects, the bill clarifies some of the exemptions.

What the Liberals have done, under section 19 of this large and very complex bill—in fact, it's the budget bill. Section 19 is devoted to trying to correct some of the screw-ups—pardon my language there—to this section under the Endangered Species Act.

I think Ms. Scott has done the right thing. I want to say that in my riding, we do protect the environment. Here's what I want to say: We're proud of our natural resources in my riding and I know in Ontario. Samuel Wilmot Nature Area: Brad Reid is a person I highly regard. The Memorial Forest at the Samuel Wilmot Nature area in Newcastle is led by the Lion's Club: Terry and Jean Graham, Murray Patterson and George Rickard.

The Orono crown lands: I worked hard in 1995 and 1996 to make sure that that was preserved, and our government did it at that time. I want to thank Jim Richards, who's chair; Keith Tregunna; as well as Tracy Tonkinson, the secretary.

The Skugog Lake Stewards is another group that has worked tirelessly to improve the quality and species at risk within that area: Barb Karthein, the president; and Jamie Ross.

The Courtice Millennium Trails Complex is another classic example of my riding and the importance they put on the greenbelt, the Oak Ridges moraine and the sensitive areas that are there.

I would also say that Uxbridge, in my riding, is the trails capital of Canada, made up of people from all sectors of society, all leaders trying to protect the outdoors on the Oak Ridges moraine. I would say the Nonquon provincial wildlife area is another example—the Oshawa marsh.

1430

I'm going to allow my good friend Jerry Ouellette, from Oshawa, to have a couple of minutes, because he served as the Minister of Natural Resources. He above all could speak with some authority on this issue. With that, I'm going to leave him two minutes of his own time.

Thank you, and I expect the Liberals to think about this, do the right thing and vote for Ms. Scott's bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member for Oshawa.

Interjections.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Hang on a second. I recognized the member for Oshawa.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: No, no—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): No? Okay. The member for Huron—Bruce.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Thanks very much. Just quickly, I too am very pleased to rise today in support of Bill 73—I was here earlier and I'm back again—because our colleague from Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock has done an absolutely great job on this approach to amending this particular act. I'm pleased to support this bill because I know that she has worked so hard in building consensus. She has reached out to many people, stakeholders from across the board—agriculture to construction to aggregate to individual municipalities—who all have expressed concerns about this very issue.

I'm also pleased to rise in support of this as a farmer as well. We have to think about endangered species. What comes to mind, as a farmer, is the bobolink. Ladies

and gentlemen, this particular species of bird covers 46 jurisdictions as it migrates from northern Canada through to southern and central America as well. It's interesting: In some jurisdictions, it's a delicacy; in other jurisdictions, it's at risk. So we have to take a comprehensive look at how endangered species are defined and worked with within this act. If they were to land in our hayfield, let me tell you, we would have to prolong the cuts of hay. The second cut of hay is the most valuable cut for production of dairy in this province.

Ladies and gentlemen, we have to take a comprehensive look and listen to the experts. That's exactly what my colleague from Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock has done. We need to support this act—she has done a great job—and I support it with all my heart. Thank you for all your work.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I want to take very little time and leave some time for the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane.

Just a couple of things: Obviously, I'm going to support this particular initiative, but I just want to say up front it is not going to have the great impact that people think it's going to have because, essentially, all this bill says is to take into consequence the social and economic benefits, which is a step forward, but it's not going to revolutionize, in my view, some of the issues that are going on around the Endangered Species Act.

I want to say for the record that people in northern Ontario take their responsibility very seriously when it comes to the environment. Why? Because we don't only make our living from the forest, but a lot of us work in the forest. It is where we have our recreation. We live in the forest. The forest is a big part of the reason that people are attracted to northern Ontario. It's not to anybody's advantage—a forest company, a cottager, an angler, a hunter, a naturalist, whoever it might be—to do damage to the forest. That is why in northern Ontario, for years, we've had a process called sustainable forestry development that has a process by which we manage forest activities in northern Ontario so that, in fact, there is a forest there for our children in the generations to come.

I'm quite proud as a member of a government that actually passed that legislation so that we're able to balance off the interests of the environmentalists, the forestry companies, the cottagers, the First Nations and others so that we can draft up forest management plans that take into consequence a living forest and, in the end, we're able to do what's right for all of those people who use the forest—obviously, the animals and the fauna; obviously, the people who live in the area, and those who make their living from the economic activities of the forest.

I was a bit disappointed, but not because we had an Endangered Species Act. I think that's fine. I think all of us understand that we need to have species-at-risk legislation to protect animals and fauna that are at risk. I

think the unfortunate reality is in the way that we drafted it. We have not done it right, in the sense that we now have problems as a result of the ESA. I think that's unfortunate, because it's creating a division.

So I will vote for this bill, but I don't believe in the end it's going to make a huge difference. It might be a step in the right direction. I'll leave the rest of my time for the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to take a moment and speak in favour of this bill. The one thing this bill does is allow the minister to consider socioeconomic impact. The one thing that does is, if you create a plan without considering socioeconomic impact, what you're doing is further endangering the species, because you're hiding the problem under the carpet.

By considering socioeconomic impact, you can see the cost to society, and then you can decide where to apportion those costs to society, because it's society that wants to protect these species. As a farmer, I'm proud to be part of that society and I also want to protect species. But when you put all the costs on one part of the society, you are further endangering a species.

By taking the economic cost and the social cost into account up front, we are actually going to save more species, because the people who are on the land, the people who are in the forests, won't feel threatened by the Endangered Species Act. They will feel like they are a partner in the Endangered Species Act, and they will be a full partner in protecting species in Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, two minutes for a reply.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank all the speakers who rose today in support, and not in support, of the bill, because we do need this discussion.

The parliamentary assistant to the MNR, the member from Eglinton—Lawrence, knows very little about the Endangered Species Act. That's what I can say to his comments. I will say that I was one of the members who did vote against the Endangered Species Act when it was first introduced, because it was done in two months and there was no consultation. Thus, the fallout is happening, which I've spoken about today and have tried to address partially in this act.

When he condemned our PC Party, I just want to add, too, that more land was brought under provincial protection by the PC Party than all the former Premiers of the province of Ontario combined. We also brought in the Oak Ridges moraine act. So the accusations he slanted at us are certainly not accurate, and I wanted to bring that in.

I've had a multitude of support that I have tried to read into the record from broad cross-sections of the province. A farmer in my own riding, David Jewell from Kirkfield, said, "I believe in conservation, but it must allow for common sense. The farming community have been good

conservationists and stewards of the land. I am asking you to support Bill 73."

The president and CEO of the Ontario Forest Industries Association wrote: "Your private member's bill provides an important ... step in bringing balance to the Endangered Species Act and its associated policies." The debate is still going on.

Angelo Lombardo from the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters said that OFAH "has concluded the amendments proposed by MPP Laurie Scott are steps in the right direction to further promote the coexistence of people with nature."

Many municipalities—my own city of Kawartha Lakes and neighbouring Douro-Dummer council—passed support for this bill. The northern municipalities did.

In conclusion, I want to say a special thanks to my staff, John Spink, and our new staff, Sylvia Kim, who is an intern, for helping me prepare for today's bill, and thank the Legislature for listening.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. We will take the vote at the end of regular business.

TOBY'S ACT (RIGHT TO BE FREE FROM
DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT
BECAUSE OF GENDER IDENTITY
OR GENDER EXPRESSION), 2012
LOI TOBY DE 2012 SUR LE DROIT
À L'ABSENCE DE DISCRIMINATION
ET DE HARCELEMENT FONDÉS
SUR L'IDENTITÉ
OU L'EXPRESSION SEXUELLES

Ms. DiNovo moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 33, An Act to amend the Human Rights Code with respect to gender identity and gender expression /
Projet de loi 33, Loi modifiant le Code des droits de la personne en ce qui concerne l'identité et l'expression sexuelles.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I want to acknowledge those who have come for the reading of this bill. We have, in the members' gallery, Egale; Trans Lobby Group; Parkdale Activity-Recreation Centre; transition support, 519 community centre; and we also have Kevin Beaulieu, executive director of Pride Toronto. I want to name a few of them. I always hate doing this, because I might leave somebody off: Alex Duffy, Shadmith Manzo, Jonathan Mackereth, Dwayne Shaw, Susan Gapka, Cristin Milloy, Stefanknee Wolscht, Crystal Lee-Cummings, Davina Hader, Paul Denison, Treva Bondarenko, Zephaniah James, and Martine Stonehouse. Welcome all to Queen's Park, and thank you for your advocacy.

1440

Mr. Mike Colle: Where's Kevin?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: He's back there.

Mr. Speaker, when I was thinking about how to present this bill—it's a bill that has been tabled four times, but this is the first second reading.

I also want to thank my associates in the other parties. I want to thank Yasir Naqvi from Ottawa Centre. I want to thank Christine Elliott from Whitby—Oshawa—brave folk, both, for signing on to this and for supporting this cause. So thank you both.

I thought about how I could present it. I could start by talking about—and I will—the situation that most trans folk find themselves in. There was a huge study done in the United States. There hasn't been one presented in Canada with the same kind of numbers. This included about 7,000 trans folk in the United States. They discovered in that study that 41% had attempted suicide. That's about 25 times the normal rate of attempted suicide. They also discovered that almost one in two trans folk lived in poverty—again, way, way higher than the general population. They discovered that the vast majority of trans folk are bullied in school. It's interesting: We're talking about Bills 13 and 14 in committee now, and I have to say there's been a huge media influence and excitement about that bill, and so there should be. Certainly, we in the New Democratic Party would like to see GSAs be allowed in schools. I'll say it right up front.

Applause.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you. But, you know, we had a press conference the other day around this issue, and no press showed up. That's what we're dealing with here. We're dealing with a problem that often goes unrecognized. It goes unrecognized, unacknowledged and has the results that I just told you about in the study. That's what happens to trans folk.

I could talk about the legal aspects. I could talk about the recent Human Rights Tribunal action with XY—which is groundbreaking—where XY won against the Ministry of Consumer Services, won a groundbreaking challenge, which was to say that you shouldn't have to go through a surgical procedure to be able to use identification that shows that you're a woman, even though you haven't had the transition surgery—or a man; vice versa—that this is actually anti the human rights of trans folk.

This is exactly the reason that we need explicit protection in the Human Rights Code. It has been argued that it's already implicit. That's not what Barbara Hall says, who, when I first tabled this years ago, wrote a letter to the Toronto Star in support of explicit wording—"gender identity" and "gender expression"—in the Ontario Human Rights Code.

I could talk about the federal instance, where we know that trans folk have been stopped from boarding planes. Human Rights Watch in the United States said, "If you're a trans person, don't try to fly in Canada." Come on, this is an embarrassment on an international scale. Why? Because, very quietly, in 2010, the then Minister of Transport federally brought in a regulation that said that you gotta match the presenting ID—in the minds, of

course, of the people checking. Again, this is an incredible deterrent for trans people just to travel.

Federally, there's a bill before the House for the second time to look at adding gender identity and gender expression federally for that very reason. We all know about Jenna—Jenna, the trans person, the woman who wanted to enter the Miss Universe contest and was denied that. It made a lot of international press.

Mr. Mike Colle: And Donald Trump—

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Donald Trump, absolutely. Again, he was forced to backtrack on that, thankfully—but again, another very, very obvious instance of trans phobia. It's real; it's everywhere. It's here in Ontario, it's across Canada and it's international. That's the reality of trans phobia.

I could talk about the trans lobby efforts. What an amazing group of people we have here, Mr. Speaker, an amazing group of brave individuals who have been at this for years—I might say decades. They have been championing this without a great deal of support.

I might also talk about some of the people at Parkdale Activity-Recreation Centre, who have been champions of all of those who suffer oppression in my area of Parkdale, and who have also championed the cause of trans folk as well, so I welcome you here too. It's wonderful to see you.

I could talk about where it's better in the world. It is better in other jurisdictions. The Northwest Territories has gender identity in their human rights code. We know it can be done in Canada. The entire European economic union recognizes gender identity as a way of discriminating against people. So we're a little behind here, but we can catch up. I'm hopeful, today, Mr. Speaker, that that's exactly what we're going to do.

I could speak about all those things, but what I really want to talk about is a person, Toby Dancer, because this is known as Toby's Act. Let me tell you about Toby. Toby died about eight years ago. Toby first walked into my church looking like a man—it turned out Toby was a woman; looking First Nations—it turned out Toby was of Ukrainian heritage; looking like a drifter—it turned out Toby was one of the most accomplished musicians in Canada. She had actually produced Ian Tyson albums. She played the piano for us, and we were blown away when we heard her play. She was a phenomenal jazz musician. She eventually became the music director of my church. Toby also started a gospel choir for us, as well as being the music director over at Parkdale Activity-Recreation Centre. I'm seeing nods because some of Toby's fellow musicians are here.

Toby changed lives.

Toby, like many trans folk, also suffered from depression, also suffered from addiction issues. Toby eventually died from those issues. At Toby's funeral, I said, "We may be the first church"—and let me backtrack a little bit, because this is what we did in our church—"to put a stained glass window in the sanctuary depicting a trans person," because we had one made of Toby playing the piano, and it's up in Emmanuel Howard Park United

Church on Roncesvalles as we speak. I said, "We may be the first church to have done it," and somebody called out, "What about Joan of Arc?" They're right, Mr. Speaker. What about Joan of Arc? What about those trans people in history that already have stained glass windows of them? So Toby may not be the first, but we're very, very proud of that window in that church. It has been the site of many filmings and photographs, and will be there forever and will commemorate a very, very special person.

I want to talk about Toby, because Toby changed the lives of everyone who knew her. We all came to know trans issues in our church through Toby. That same church became the site of the first ordained trans person in Canada.

Applause.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Yes, absolutely—Cindy Bourgeois, who, again, when she first walked into our church, walked in as a man and walked out as an ordained woman in the United Church of Canada and is now in Stratford. If you go to Stratford, go see Cindy preach.

That church became a centre of a wonderful movement around trans folk and around combatting trans phobia, just by our very example.

Toby also was the subject, in part, of a book that I wrote. That book went on, after Toby's death, unfortunately—because I really wished she could have been with me in Washington to receive the Lambda award for that book for spirituality and religion. It was based on what we had done to be an inclusive church. It's called *Qu(e)rying Evangelism*. In light of the great production of Bill 13 and Bill 14 and all of the deputations we heard, it's particularly pertinent, because the argument of that book was that you can grow a church, you can grow an inclusive community by being inclusive and still being Christian. I want that on the record, Mr. Speaker: You can be inclusive; you can still be Christian. We did it. We proved it. We grew that church. We got that church to survive. Toby was a part of that, and part of the book is dedicated to Toby. Now I can use her real name; in the book, she's called Mary. That was dedicated to her and to others who have died in our midst.

I'm going to have more to say on this and more to say on the whole issue of adding gender identity and gender expression to the Ontario Human Rights Code, but right now, I just want to say thank you. I want to say thank you to everyone who supported this. I want to say thank you to those who have shown up today, and not just today but have shown up for years, for decades, some of them. I want to say thank you to my colleagues from across the aisle and next to me, the Progressive Conservative and Liberal parties, for also adding to this bill and adding their support for it, because if there's one thing I know and there's one thing I really want to see, it's that at this Pride, this year, we march in a Pride Parade in a province where gender identity and gender expression has been added to the Ontario Human Rights Code and where we celebrate it at Pride. So that's what I'm looking forward to.

1450

I'm going to leave some time for my colleagues, and I look forward to talking more about Toby, more about trans issues, more about inclusivity, in fact, and what it means to be an inclusive society a little later.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak on a very important bill, An Act to amend the Human Rights Code with respect to gender identity and gender expression. I stand here today as one of the co-sponsors, along with the MPP from Parkdale–High Park and the MPP from Whitby–Oshawa, wholeheartedly supporting this bill.

My family came to Canada almost 24 years ago. One of the biggest reasons my parents chose this country and this province as their home is because of that quintessential Canadian value of equality, where we all are equal, that all our rights are protected.

We have a situation right now that we have a little gap. There's a vacuum that exists that we need to rectify. What this very simple piece of legislation does—it's not very complicated; it's one page long—is it ensures that members of a trans community in the province of Ontario have the same rights accorded to them as everyone in this province. It makes us greater. It makes us more equal. It celebrates our diversity. That is the reason I'm so happy to be part of this legislation: that we are ensuring that equality is accorded to every single human being in our great province, because that makes us stronger and that makes us even stronger Canadians in terms of the values we enjoy so much.

Now, Speaker, it's very interesting; I want to bring a perspective here, and that is that, thankfully, under the Ontario Human Rights Code, the rights of the trans community are protected. Under the definition of "sex," their rights are protected. So what we're doing today by approving this bill is nothing earth-shattering. What we're doing is bringing more clarity. By what we're doing—and I perhaps speak as a lawyer for a second—we're bringing case law, what the courts have decided and interpreted, into law. That's our role. We're supposed to do that. We're supposed to take what courts decide for us and say, "Yes, that's the right thing," and enshrine it in the law. That's what we're doing so there is no ambiguity, so there is absolutely clarity when it comes to the rights of trans people in the province of Ontario, so nobody can discriminate against members of the trans community, so that their rights are protected when it comes to employment, when it comes to accommodation, when it comes to just living their daily lives, being who they are. That's what we're doing here, and it's something that I'm confident that all members of this House are going to support.

I'm very proud, Speaker, to represent the great riding of Ottawa Centre, which is home to Ottawa's perhaps largest trans community. I have a great opportunity to work and learn from the trans community in Ottawa. I want to highlight two women in the trans community

from my riding who have helped me understand, who have helped me learn about this issue. Joanne Law is one individual who has been so active and so involved in the community at large as a transgendered woman. The work she has done for the LGBTQ community in Ottawa Centre, the work she continues to do with Pride, the work she does in going into schools and talking to young people, is incredible. I want to take this opportunity to thank Joanne for educating me, for really making me part of the community and understand why passing Bill 33 is so important.

The other person who I also want to thank is Jessica Freedman. Jessica was the very first transgendered woman who asked me the question about this issue the very first time I ran in 2007. Instead of making up an answer, as some of my other opponents did in that debate, I told her very clearly, "I don't know the answer. Please educate me. Here's my card. Can we go for a coffee so I can ask you questions?" She said yes, and we went—I remember that day—we went for coffee, and I said to her, "My apologies in advance. I'm going to ask a lot of questions, and many of them will be stupid questions." She said, "There's no such thing as a stupid question. Go ahead." And I asked her very personal questions, and she answered and she gave me stuff to read and helped educate me about the trans community, about the transformation that goes through where somebody may recognize that they are not a man, they are a woman, or vice versa.

Jessica and I became good friends. She's actually at Carleton University, I think, doing a master's in social work right now—just an incredible human being. I want to take this opportunity to thank Jessica for informing me, for educating me, for answering my questions whenever I had those questions.

Speaker, I know there are other colleagues of mine who also want to speak on this very important issue. I am just very pleased to be standing here today, the first time ever in this great Legislature that we are debating the inclusion of gender identity and gender expression in Ontario human rights. The time is right. This is the time to ensure that we bring clarity to Ontario human rights. The term "sexual orientation" does not cover the trans community. The term "sex" does not cover the trans community. We need to incorporate the terms "gender expression" and "gender identity" in the Human Rights Code to ensure that members of Ontario's trans community are equal to every single other Ontarian, because by doing so, we're making our province stronger and we are ensuring that we continue to celebrate the diversity in this great province of ours.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I am very pleased to rise today and join in this discussion of Bill 33, Toby's Act (Right to be Free from Discrimination and Harassment Because of Gender Identity or Gender Expression), and I am very pleased that I am joined today by my colleagues the members from Burlington and Barrie and sharing my

time with them. I'm also very proud to be a co-sponsor of this bill along with the member from Parkdale–High Park, who originated this bill, and the member from Ottawa Centre.

I would note—and it has probably been mentioned before by other speakers—that this is the fourth time that the member from Parkdale–High Park has raised Toby's Act but the first time that it has been co-sponsored. So I hope that, in this case at least, the fourth time's the charm. We're hoping for the best here.

I'd also like to thank Susan Gapka and the members of the Trans Lobby Group who are joining us here today for both their commitment to this issue and their tenacity in bringing this forward. You are really to be congratulated for getting this to this point today.

I'd just like to go back a little bit and recall when I first met Susan, which was in 2006, just shortly after my election to this Legislature. Some of the very first pieces of legislation I dealt with as a new member, and in my capacity as critic to the Attorney General and as a member of the Standing Committee on Justice Policy, were the amendments to the Ontario Human Rights Code. It was then known as Bill 107. At that time, Susan appeared and was making the same arguments that she has continued to make, which are that everyone is entitled to the dignity and protection of the Human Rights Code, and that the inclusion of gender identity and gender expression, along with race, ancestry, place of origin, colour and all of the other things that we talk about when we speak about the Ontario Human Rights Code, should be included. Gender expression and gender identity should be included with that, to clarify and make sure that the rights of trans people are included as well.

Fundamentally, I agree that this is a matter of basic human rights, and that's why I'm really proud to be able to co-sponsor this bill. I truly believe that everyone has the right to be fully included in our society, and everyone deserves the rights and protection of the Ontario Human Rights Code, period, end of sentence, no exceptions. That's what I think we're fundamentally dealing with here.

I agree with the member from Ottawa Centre that it isn't properly included, although some may say that "sexual orientation" would cover the situation here, but I agree that it's not fully clarified, that what we're dealing with here isn't a huge movement; it's simply making sure that everyone understands that everyone is to be included, and gender identity and gender expression are to be included.

There was a letter that was sent by Ontario Human Rights Commissioner Barbara Hall in 2007 on this issue, and she noted that "the lack of explicit inclusion in the legislation means that trans people's distinct experiences of discrimination remain unacknowledged.... Amending the code would provide clarity and greater recognition of the dignity of transgender people, and would leave no doubt, in the eyes of the public or the law, that they are entitled to the same human rights protections as everyone else."

1500

I totally agree, Mr. Speaker, and I think that some of the problems that people have encountered in terms of obtaining identification and obtaining travel documentation clearly show the fact that it hasn't been completely accepted and understood by everyone. I hope that obtaining all-party support of this—and I hope that all members will join us in supporting this bill—would absolutely clarify the issue once and for all and we could move forward on this issue.

I want to leave some time for my colleagues to speak on this, but I thank you very much for your time here.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I want to thank the co-sponsors of the bill, the members from Whitby–Oshawa and Ottawa Centre, but, in particular, to congratulate my colleague who sits beside me, who is very articulate, who is fearless, who is persistent and a passionate advocate for human rights. She never gives up. This is the fourth attempt and I believe this is going to work this time around.

I want to say how afraid politicians are to do the right thing. I saw this when we debated Bill 167 about 20 years ago, the bill that would give gays and lesbians the same rights that heterosexuals have. Politicians were incredibly afraid, and we didn't win enough support from the members to pass that bill. We'd rather let the courts deal with it until they beat us into submission, until we do the right thing, because we are afraid to lead on these issues. I think it's a crime.

Here we have another opportunity to include gender identity and gender expression in the Ontario Human Rights Code, and I am persuaded that we're going to win this time around. It will not end discrimination, but people will know they cannot discriminate. And the time has come.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'm proud to rise today to speak in favour of this bill, and "proud" is an important word here. By taking a stand with this bill, we are showing pride in our diversity. We're showing that we're proud of every single Ontarian, no matter their gender identity, no matter their gender expression, but more importantly, by showing that we're proud, we're taking a stand against shame. We're taking a stand against stigma and discrimination. We're saying to trans people of all ages that they should never be ashamed of who they are and that they should never be made to feel that way; and to young people who may be struggling with their gender identity, although you may feel vulnerable, you are protected. You are loved.

I believe that we have an opportunity with this bill to show leadership. It's the kind of opportunity that doesn't come along every day. We have the opportunity to move society forward and embrace our responsibility, not just as legislators but as citizens in an open society. We have the opportunity with this bill to recognize the funda-

mental human rights of a community that is entitled to all of the protections that that affords, a community that is entitled to feel proud of who they are, a community that is entitled to live their lives free from shame and free from the barriers that our society often puts in place for trans people.

As a medical doctor, I know how difficult those barriers can be. They have adverse effects on the health of trans people, whether it's their physical health or their mental health. Our profession, the medical profession, views being trans as a normal part of the human condition. Many of my colleagues in the medical profession work with many trans people through these very important transitions in their lives.

As an elected official and as a legislator, it is my belief that the laws must reflect and protect the normalcy, dignity and humanity of my transgender friends in the same way that my profession, the medical profession, treats and respects this extraordinary community.

As someone who spends each day fully invested in helping our children and youth meet their full potential, I know how important it is for us as legislators to take a stand today against shame and tear down those barriers, fight that stigma, tell young people struggling with gender identity that nothing is wrong with them. Instead, let's say to that young person, "You are not alone. You are protected. You are loved."

I want to thank the authors of this bill today for taking that stand, and I want to encourage all members of this Legislature to join us in recognizing the fundamental human rights of all Ontarians, no matter their gender identity.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Thank you to the member from Whitby–Oshawa and, of course, the members from Parkdale–High Park and Ottawa Centre.

I have said before that I believe we are all God's children. I firmly believe this to be so. I have said before repeatedly that no one should suffer discrimination or persecution because of who they are and the road they walk in this life. We pride ourselves on being a modern society, a progressive place. We aspire to the ideas enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the idea that "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights"; that all people are entitled to these rights "without distinction of any kind"; that "all are equal before the law and are entitled ... to equal protection of the law," without discrimination.

We celebrate the home-grown beauty of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, under which "everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of the person and the right not to be deprived thereof except in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice;" and under which "every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination...."

And yet, under the current language of the Ontario Human Rights Code, the equalities and freedoms that

most of us enjoy, and which far too many of us take for granted, are spelled out clearly for some and are implied for others. Bill 33 addresses that shortcoming. It amends the Human Rights Code to specify that every person has a right to equal treatment without discrimination because of gender identity or gender expression with respect to services, goods and facilities; accommodations; contracting; employment; and membership in a trade union, trade or occupational association or self-governing profession. The bill also amends the code to specify that every person has a right to be free from harassment because of gender identity or gender expression with respect to accommodation and employment.

There is widespread agreement in legal circles that transgender and transsexual persons, or trans people, are implicitly protected by the Human Rights Code. But because this protection is not specifically laid out in the code, discrimination cases that come before a tribunal suffer because of the fuzziness and the lack of clear historical precedence. It can be a vicious circle. Cases drag on and on. Discrimination seems to carry with it no real consequences, which can lead to an increase in discrimination and, in turn, more discrimination cases being filed.

Beyond the cost that comes with gridlock at the tribunal level, there is also a cost in terms of lost social equality. If we truly want all Ontarians to enjoy these fundamental rights and freedoms, they should be extended to all Ontarians.

We in this House might understand more than most how tenderly the spirit of legislation is often treated. We know how common it is for people to honour only the outline of the letter of the law and no more. Maybe there are some areas where we can resign ourselves to that reality. Human rights isn't one of them. The idea that anyone should be denied the full scope of freedoms, rights and protections that others enjoy as a birthright, even though they could even be identical twins, strikes me as a little bit inconsistent.

The need to specify this detail is even more apparent when you consider the Liberal government's lacklustre track record on human rights enforcement. But setting that aside, it is an issue of equality and fairness, and of walking the walk when it comes to constitutional rights and freedoms.

1510

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Jonah Schein: I am genuinely happy and proud to stand up here today and speak to this issue. There are days in this Legislature when I feel worried that we're not making progress, worried that this Legislature does not function. But I'm happy to stand and support Toby's Act today.

I worked in the city for a long time as a social worker before I was elected. I was a volunteer counsellor at The 519 in Toronto. I've seen the health issues that face the trans community in the city and the prejudice that people experience, and this is a small step but a very important step moving forward.

I think it's incredibly important to recognize activists for this work. It's inspiring to me to see you here, whatever your cause is, because in many ways you have the hardest work to do. You've taken on one of the hardest causes to fight, but see that it matters. We can't do it without you, and that's the truth. Whatever the issue is, we need activists, we need people, we need everyday Ontarians to stand up and say what's right and what's important, and to come into this House and explain to people here that every single person in this province matters. So I thank you for that.

It's incredible to me to knock on doors in Davenport and see young people who are LGBT and young trans people. There weren't trans kids that I knew about when I was a kid, and to see the older folks—you have done the work to make it easier to be a trans kid today, and I think that younger people have you to thank for that too. It speaks for the entire queer community that the doors have been broken down in many ways, and that's a huge tribute to you.

I want again to thank all members of the House for working together on this. It's inspiring. I'm frustrated by the pace of progress. I'm frustrated that it has taken this long. But President Obama in the United States finally came out yesterday in support of gay marriage. That's a good step. That's an important step.

I'm frustrated that we still have a mayor who will not recognize Pride in Toronto. We need to change that, but I am hopeful.

I do want to recognize the member from Parkdale—High Park for championing this issue. She does it because no matter what the politics are, she knows that it's social justice that's important, that it's people all over this province who are important. She's gone out on a limb to do that, and I'm glad that we're seeing change here today.

Again, I want to thank you in the balconies today for your work. I'll save some time for my fellow colleagues. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I always try not to be emotional when I talk about these things, but every time we get into this, I'm always taken back to the worst moments in my life. Growing up as a gay man, as a gay kid, when everyone thought you were straight until they discovered you were gay, I didn't understand what prejudice was, because when everyone thought I was a straight kid, I didn't feel much of it. But I remember that when I was in my mid-teens, all of a sudden I was dealing with a level of hatred. Telling my father this news about me—I spoke about this when we were talking about Bill 13—and then not having my father talk to me for three years was very hard for a young person.

I try to imagine if I went to my father and said, "Dad, I know you think I'm a boy, but I'm actually a girl." I think the consequences would have been much more severe than him not talking to me, and our eventual reconciliation and the very close relationship I had with this extraordinarily lovely and honest man.

So, in our entire complex gay, lesbian, transgender—just human—family, it's the "T" that is the most courageous, and to all of you, thank you very much. I cannot imagine the courage it takes to be you. You are an inspiration beyond the transgender community to every young person who feels different and thinks it's impossible to ever have a great and healthy life with love and respect. You are a shining example of the very best of humanity by the simple acts of courage of saying, "I and we," and coming down today as courageous people.

Émile Zola and Hannah Arendt are two of my heroes. I know, with my friend Cheri, and Rosario—happy birthday, Rosario—I want to thank you. I want to thank all of you: Yasir, Christine, Julia, all of you who have spoken—my friend Kathleen, and Eric and Laurel, who have worked so hard in our caucus.

I want to acknowledge as well that Bill 13, which is now before committee, actually has gender identity and expression in it. We're actually moving this already in law, so hopefully. But this will be a historic day.

For me, there's two things I want to say in 30 seconds. One, it's the first time in my life my straight friends are leading this. I'm the caboose in this parade. But it's a young Muslim guy and a nice United Church preacher who aren't gay. I represent that.

The second thing is, in my last 10 seconds, the most important thing is not what happens today, but what happens next, getting this through committee and back here and every one of us not ever hiding that we're supporting this.

I'm going to the mosques in my community. I'm going to people who I think might be most afraid of this and spending my time explaining why this is a good thing in the coming weeks. God bless. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Speaker, it's a great pleasure to stand here before everybody today and speak in support of Bill 33, Toby's Act. This is, as the member from Parkdale—High Park mentioned, the fourth time this bill has passed through, but this is the first time it's been co-sponsored by members from each party, which I think speaks to the strength of it and it speaks to the need to do what this bill does.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the member from Parkdale—High Park, the member from Ottawa Centre and our own member from Whitby—Oshawa for bringing this forward. It takes a certain amount of courage, too, to be a voice for those that don't have their own in this House, especially on subjects that can be as contentious as this one.

There are so many people who are marginalized and vulnerable in our community. I think, as the minister just mentioned, this is one of the most courageous groups, one of the ones that will have the most difficulty, and I'm proud to stand here today to try to get this bill forwarded. I mean, four times—hopefully this thing has done enough mileage that we'll see the light of day on this one.

If my memory serves, when this bill was last introduced in 2010, the Attorney General at the time rejected the bill on the basis that transgendered people's rights are already protected under the code. However, it's necessary, I believe, to further these protections, to clarify the protections in the act. Speaker, it would certainly do no harm.

The purpose of Toby's Act is to explicitly state that transgendered people are entitled to the same human rights protection offered to all Ontarians, regardless of their race, creed, religion, colour, sexual orientation or sexual identity.

Along with the deterrent regulatory functions, law also has an expressive function. It's twofold. First, scholars from academic institutions around the world have produced empirical data and theoretical bases supporting the position that law can affect people's behaviour beyond deterrence. Law can change the way we interact within our own communities. By explicitly stating that every Ontarian is entitled to the same human rights protection, regardless of their gender identity and orientation, we can reduce the amount of hidden discrimination facing transgendered people. Second, the ties we wear, the cars we drive, the charities we donate to, the political parties we belong to, are expressions of who we are and what we value as individuals. Similarly, the laws that we pass in this chamber are expressions of who we are as Ontarians and what we value and cherish as a community.

By passing Toby's Act, we're sending a clear message that we as a community are standing up for the rights of everyone in this great province by reaffirming our continued effort to combat all forms of prejudice and discrimination.

Bill 33 is named in honour of Toby Dancer. Most of us will know that she was a transgendered person and a musical genius.

Since the Conservative Party, led by Premier Robarts, enacted the Human Rights Code in 1961, our province has made leaps and bounds in recognizing and protecting the human rights of people and the most vulnerable and marginalized groups.

Toby Dancer's tragedy is something to be remembered. We have to also remember that the dignity, respect and the heart and soul that we all have is shared by everybody, regardless of their gender, regardless of their identity, and everybody deserves to learn from each other and to move forward with the knowledge that we all have something to share, no matter what our race, creed, colour, religion or sexual identity is.

1520

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Je voulais ajouter ma voix à celle de ceux et celles qui ont parlé avant moi pour expliquer ce qu'on essaie de faire aujourd'hui avec le projet de loi 33. Le projet de loi 33 va modifier le Code des droits de la personne pour qu'on ajoute non seulement que la discrimination ne peut pas se faire au

sujet de l'orientation sexuelle, mais qu'elle ne peut pas se faire non plus au sujet de l'identité sexuelle ou l'expression sexuelle.

Donc, que l'on parle des droits du travail, au logement, à un contrat, d'avoir le droit d'exercer sa profession sans harcèlement et sans discrimination, bien, le projet de loi 33 va rajouter à ça l'identité sexuelle ainsi que l'orientation sexuelle. On a parlé beaucoup de ce que ça veut dire d'être trans en Ontario. Ce n'est pas toujours facile. Je peux parler pour mon comté. La communauté LGBTQQ n'est pas très grande.

Maybe I'll say this part in English. In the north, we say LGBTQQ. The second "T" is for two-spirited.

We have lots to learn from the First Nations. One of the beautiful teachings that the First Nations brings is this acceptance of the two-spirited world. When you go to a powwow—I don't know if any of you down here have had the opportunity, but I actually attend quite a few of them—the two-spirited are very easy to spot. They are some of the leaders, and they're easy to see because they will wear different colours. All of their costumes and all of their dancing are done as two. So half of their feathers will be one colour; the other half of their head feathers will be a different colour. And the way they dance is very different because they are looked upon as gifted because they are two-spirited. It's always my pleasure to share with you that, although I am very much in favour of LGBTQ, I always say "LGBTQQ" so we don't forget the two-spirited people.

Ça me fait toujours plaisir d'ajouter ma voix et de rappeler aux gens que les petits pas qu'on fait ici, ce sont des pas qui peuvent nous amener sur un long chemin. Les gens de la communauté trans du nord de l'Ontario n'ont pas la vie facile. J'aimerais remercier Rita et Sky, qui sont deux membres de la communauté trans de Sudbury, qui ont vraiment mené le bal.

On a un bar gay à Sudbury; ça s'appelle Zig's. Mais toute la communauté de Sudbury est invitée. Ils ont le meilleur karaoké à Sudbury, si jamais vous êtes intéressés, et il y a beaucoup de partage qui se fait là et il y a beaucoup de positif qui se fait là. Mais dans la vie de tous les jours, on a la chance de leur rendre la vie un petit peu plus facile parce que, comme mon collègue a dit, lorsque tu annonces à ta famille que, vraiment, tu as l'air d'un homme, tu as une barbe, tu as des gros muscles, tu as la grosseur d'un homme, mais vraiment dans toutes les cellules de ton cœur et de ton corps tu es une femme, ce n'est pas une décision facile à partager. Les gens qui ont eu à vivre ça ont eu de la difficulté.

Là, je vois ma collègue qui me regarde. C'est parce qu'elle veut que je lui laisse du temps.

I will leave my colleague a little bit of time on the clock. It was my pleasure to add my voice in support of Toby's Law.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm so humbled by listening to all of this. A couple of points that need to be made: It has been insinuated—not here, but it has been directly said

and insinuated in other places—that we don't need explicit wording, gender identity and gender expression, in the Ontario Human Rights Code. I want to tell you that I'm old enough to remember as a young person fighting for sex, for gender itself, in the Ontario Human Rights Code. I remember being told, "But the word 'man'"—do we all remember this?—"the word 'man' covers everyone." Do we remember that as women? The word "man" covers everyone. But we fought for the explicit: "No, we need 'sex' in the Ontario Human Rights Code." Those were the days of "Help wanted: male" and "Help wanted: female."

We've come a long way since then. We've come a long way, and it's a good way. We live in a kinder and gentler place. We live in a better place. One of the most humbling experiences of this afternoon, I think, is to look around this Legislature and to see this Legislature at its very best, and that is that all people agree on this. Thank goodness we live in Ontario and Canada. I feel extremely proud to be an Ontarian and a Canadian today, because we stand for justice and we all stand for human rights. We have seen the "progressive" in Progressive Conservative today, we have seen true liberals in the Liberal Party today, and we've seen true democrats in the New Democratic Party. I have to say, the "party" part will come later, when we all celebrate after.

I want to thank, in particular, Susan Gapka and Martine Stonehouse—those are the two people who jump out at me when I think about this—and others. I don't want to leave anybody out again. I can tell you that Susan Gapka has visited all of us. We all know Susan, and she has been on this issue for a long, long time. When I think of a good lobbyist—that is to say, not one with money, not one with power and influence but one with just dogged determination to do what's right and to fight for social justice—I mention Susan Gapka. So, Susan Gapka, absolutely, and Martine and all the rest of you. Absolutely.

Yes, I can certainly say that we also do Toby Dancer proud today—Toby, whose other name was Adrian Chornowol, so if you look her up under the male name, you'll find her production assets and her creative genius writ large in music history in Canada. But again, we knew her as Toby Dancer. And when we buried Toby Dancer—Toby always dressed in jeans and T-shirts; Toby was not a flashy dresser—under those jeans was a little black miniskirt, and that's how she wanted to be buried. That image of Toby—long grey hair, playing the piano; absolutely a woman in every sense of the word; absolutely a social justice activist; absolutely ahead of her time; and absolutely a person who struggled with demons we can only fear and imagine—all of those go into this bill. Toby goes into this bill, and today Toby's here. There's no question: Toby's here.

All of those who have died, all of those who have attempted suicide, all of those who struggle with depression, all of those in the trans community: They're here in spirit too. So it's not just two-spirited; it's multi-spirited here today. We are surrounded by a crowd of wit-

nesses—a cloud of witnesses—who watch what we do, who admire what we do and who say, “Thank you for putting aside, just for a moment, partisan differences. Thank you for putting aside all of those things that”—and, quite frankly, we should celebrate those differences. Isn't it great that we're different, even here?

But just for this afternoon, we come together as one to say: We need to save lives here. We need to include a group that has been excluded for a long, long time in the Ontario Human Rights Code. And I think we're going to do it. I think we're actually going to pass this. And call me optimistic, but I think it's going to go in and out of committee very quickly so that all of us—particularly the members from Ottawa Centre and Whitby—Oshawa, those brave folk—will be standing in our Pride parades and celebrating that Ontario is, unfortunately, not the first—Northwest Territories was—but, hey, almost the first province in Canada to have gender identity and gender expression in the Ontario Human Rights Code. That's what it's about today.

Brothers and sisters—and I say that truly meaning “brothers and sisters”—thank you for your support. Thank you all for your courage and your bravery. Finally, thank you, for the activists. Absolutely, absolutely. And thank you for doing what you do, everyone.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal with the vote at the end of regular business.

PROPERTY OWNERS' PROTECTION ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LA PROTECTION DES PROPRIÉTAIRES FONCIERS

Mr. Marchese moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 72, An Act to amend the Condominium Act, 1998 and other Acts to increase protection for property owners / Projet de loi 72, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur les condominiums et d'autres lois pour accroître la protection des propriétaires fonciers.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

1530

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Thank you very much, Speaker. I want to thank the condominium owners who have come here today to witness this debate. These are all people who—some are board members, some have struggled in their own way with conflicts they've had, either with a board or with a property manager or indeed many of them with developers. I thank you for coming.

We haven't had one single amendment to the condo act since 1998. And since that time, we have seen an explosion of condominium construction in the city of Toronto, in the GTA and beyond. It speaks strongly to the need, with all of the emerging problems, to change the Condominium Act. Prior to 1998, the building of condominiums was good, was healthy. Construction was good, and there were few complaints. Since 1998,

wherever you build a condominium, we have seen an explosion of problems. And it keeps going along, because now we not only have credible condominium developers who have a long history of great development, we now have an emerging group of developers who are here to make money and move on to the next project and leave a mess as they move on.

The complaints from condominiums and condominium owners are legion. We don't have enough time to talk about them all. But there are problems that I hear about elevators on a regular basis. Why is it that we have problems with elevators in the first year of construction? Because developers use contractors who clearly don't have the experience or the expertise and, as a result, in the very first year, elevators are not working. How could that be? We're talking about condominiums. We're talking about people who have to go from the first floor all the way to the 40th floor and beyond. We have people who complain about air conditioning, piping, floors that are warped. Yesterday at a meeting, I was told of a case where not only do you have a declaration that you have to look at, that you think is final, but in this particular case, the developer introduced an addendum contract with extra fees attached to it. I had never heard of it. That was the first time. The problems are huge, and we need to be able to deal with them.

What do we have by way of remedy? By way of remedy, what we have is the court system. To be fair to the previous Conservative government that made this change, they have within the bill the ability of any party that has a grievance to be able to go through mediation and arbitration. But even that process, prior to going to court, is a very expensive legal procedure. It doesn't necessarily bring about the result that a condominium owner might expect or like.

The problem is that the majority of condominium owners don't even know that that measure exists in the Condominium Act; but even if they did, I still maintain that it's very expensive, and the majority of people I know who want to defend themselves go to the court system to defend themselves if they have to. The reason why there are very few court cases is because it is incredibly expensive and nobody can afford it. I have mentioned in the past people who have taken issues to the court system, and we've heard of \$120,000 in legal costs with this individual, another individual with \$40,000 in costs, another person spent \$20,000. Of course, these cases have not ended with a positive result—except individual owners had to spend a great deal of money defending themselves. It's simply wrong.

We need to be able to have a place where people can go and defend themselves cheaply and quickly, and that is why I propose in Bill 72, as I have proposed in every other legislation that I've introduced here in the past, that we create a review board, a review board that would look something similar to what renters have. Renters have the ability to go to a tribunal to defend themselves. Renters are able to pay a \$25 fee and defend themselves. Landlords, of course—

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Friends, if you want to speak—hey, guys.

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Hey, Norm.

Landlords can pay their fee of \$150 and defend themselves, as well—clearly, they bring lawyers with them—but at least a renter has the ability to defend himself or herself. A review board would allow such a process to kick in. It would allow a condo owner who has a problem with a developer to go somewhere and get a speedy result of a grievance that he or she has with the developer.

At the moment, if you've got a problem with whatever it is, whether your floors are warped or your floors have been scratched or the furniture has been ruined along the way, or other appliances, you've got to go to either the developer or Taron, and you get no satisfaction. You're not going to get the developer, unless the developer is one of the reputable ones—you're not going to get them to fix something unless they fear that by not doing it, their reputation is at stake or somehow they might lose a court case in the process, even though they generally do not. The point of having a review board is to allow a person to take a developer to the review board, to take a board to a review board or to take a property manager to a review board, and the case gets settled.

We think, or the government has argued in the past, that there is mediation, arbitration, and there's Taron that would help to solve the disputes. The problem with Taron is this: It represents developers. That is the single most important problem with Taron. Yes, they are there to provide assistance with warranty problems, but when the board is made up of developers, it's hard to believe that you're going to get justice; it's hard to believe that you're going to get fairness.

One of my friends was up there. We did a quick review of the current Taron structure, and we noticed that 10 of them were connected to developers, and the other seven we didn't recognize, which doesn't mean they may not have been connected to developers. The problem is, they represent developers, by and large, and while in the last three or four years they've gotten better because of the bills that I have brought forward to this Legislature—because I think somehow they might be a little afraid—the problems are still big, and the condo owners simply don't get the fairness they deserve.

We want to change the structure of the Taron board to make sure that half of them represent consumers, i.e., condominium owners and homeowners, and until that structure changes, they are not going to get the satisfaction that they deserve.

We want to be able to put in this bill good-faith language. Why do we want to do that? Because when condominium owners go to a showroom and they're told, "This is what you're going to get," by the time they move in, it's not what they get; they get something else. Good-faith language will force the developer to do what he or she said prior to construction. They're bound by law if such language is put in the legislation, and we think it's

critical because the stories we hear are that changes are made when you move in—and it's too bad, so sad.

The majority of people never read the declaration. Why? Because it is an incredibly complex document. It's written by lawyers for developers, deliberately confusing, so you never read them. In order to be able to understand the language and understand what you're getting into, you need to hire a condo lawyer. A condo lawyer will cost you anywhere from \$3,000 to \$5,000. The majority of condo owners are just people with modest-income jobs. Some are wealthy, God bless, but the majority don't have high income and they can't afford it, so they rely on real estate agents for the best advice. Real estate agents are good, but they're not as good as condo lawyers to be able to interpret that declaration. So the majority of people who get into those condominiums don't have a clue what they're getting into. They think they get that key and out they go and everything is hunky-dory, until they move in and realize that the problems are many.

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The final amendment that I want to speak about—although there are many more amendments that I won't have the time to speak to—is the need to license property managers. Many property managers are good, but many others are not. If they're not good, you as a condominium owner have a serious problem. We believe they should be licensed. If they were to be licensed, as I hope they would be, they would have to follow some rigid criteria, some rigid qualifications—qualifications that would allow them to deal with maintenance issues, allow them to be good managers and allow them to better understand the Condominium Act. The majority of property managers don't have a clue what is contained in the Condominium Act. It's complex to read, and it's pretty thick.

These are the main amendments that we want to make. There are others, such as improving noise protection standards, and for that we'd have to change the building code. That's a big one, because a lot of people complain they are able to hear their neighbours. That cannot be a pleasant experience. So we want to change that, including requiring developers to disclose all previous business names used to construct condo projects.

These are the highlights, Speaker. I'm hoping that this time around we're going to get the support, that we're going to move it to the legislative committee and we're finally going to debate it on third reading.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I would also like to welcome the members from the condominium community in the east gallery. I will be sharing my time with the member from Mississauga East-Cooksville.

It's a pleasure to speak on Bill 72, and I applaud the member from Trinity-Spadina for his commitment to this issue.

Mr. Speaker, as we all know, the condominium marketplace has exploded over the last decade. There are many stakeholders with varied interests, and there is a lot of talk about this issue in my riding of Mississauga—

Brampton South as well. I think it's an important conversation which is very much of interest to all of us.

I have had several conversations with condo owners, developers, builders and condo managers in my riding. These stakeholders have stated that there is a need to amend the condo act and there is a need for change. It's clear that when we talk about the need for change, change is a cause for debate and discussion for the members of the condominium community.

This year, in the month of February, Minister Best delivered a speech at the Ontario Bar Association. She also spoke about the need to amend the act. The ministry staff is currently analyzing many issues in preparation for the review of the act. The ministry also conducted a survey in 2010. The survey was about condo owners' experiences with condo corporations, repair, maintenance, reserve funds and dispute resolution. The survey questionnaire also provided the condo owners with information on their rights and responsibilities. We will also build on the information provided through online questionnaires.

The member has introduced two bills before—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Three.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: This is the third?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Fourth.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: This is the fourth. I'm sorry—three bills before to amend the condo act, which was—the two were similar in content. Bill 72—

Interjection.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: Yes.

Bill 72 differs from the previous ones. Bill 72 reads that it would provide for an appeal from a review board to Divisional Court on questions of law. The bill provides that the review board would not be a crown agency but would be a not-for-profit organization designated by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. The review board would deal with dispute resolution matters and would provide public advice and education, among other matters.

After reading this, Mr. Speaker, what is coming to my mind is that it's not clear and there are not enough details. Who would be funding that board? Would it be condominium owners or developers or the government? So it needs clarification. It lacks clarification, and we need more details.

Further, Bill 72 also proposes that the Building Code Act, 1992, be amended to require the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to ensure that a review is conducted and a written report is prepared in respect of noise protection standards for condominiums. This lacks enforcement provisions, Mr. Speaker. And the bill doesn't say how the report will be implemented and, if not implemented, what action will be required.

To review the act is a priority of this government. It's a very important issue. Having said that, it's also a complex piece of legislation, and I don't believe that Bill 72 is the right way to do so, though the idea that the member has put forward is worth looking at; there are no ifs and buts. But we need to hammer out more details as to what idea, shape and form that bill will be going to take on. We need to talk about those issues.

We will review, and we will review it with our stakeholders and partners such as the Canadian Condominium Institute and the Association of Condominium Managers of Ontario, owners, renters, condo managers, other ministries and the legal community.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you—

Interjection: It goes around.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Relax; relax.

Further debate? The member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I not only want to congratulate the member from Trinity–Spadina on his birthday—I hear he's 37 today—but also for keeping this Legislature's attention on the condo act for so many years. He has been a tireless advocate for condominium reform, sometimes finding himself the lone voice in this Legislature.

Several weeks ago, I rose to speak to motion 15 on a full review of the condo act. Both the NDP and our party look forward to such a review, but so far we've only heard rumours and speculation from the government side. We must ensure that this law is suitable for both today's issues and tomorrow's challenges.

Condo development is booming in Ontario, and piecemeal measures are not enough. We come, then, to this bill of my honourable colleague. We have supported his efforts in the past and we will do so today, with one condition: that this should serve as a seed for a full review of the condo act and not just an excuse for the government to wash its hands.

We cannot hide our concerns with this bill, and insist on hearing from all relevant stakeholders when a full act review comes to committee.

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Now for some of our issues: An additional level of bureaucracy, such as a review board, is not a PC policy, but some form of a low-cost, effective dispute mechanism is required. It cannot run on volunteers and goodwill alone; the money has to come from somewhere. Considering the boom in condo ownership that this province is experiencing, the number of cases before the board will be significant and the hours many.

Secondly, we see no reason to privilege solar or other renewable energy projects in condo law. Spending the corporation's reserve funds without notice to the members can only be justified in times of urgency, and placing a windmill on a condo roof does not warrant this approach. The member from Trinity–Spadina should not be tricked into following this government's failed green energy experiments. Their acts run roughshod over municipal consultation and his could easily do the same over condo owners—hardly a reasonable clause in an owners' protection act.

Let me touch on Tarion. The proposed expansion and coverage to five years may sound good, but it does not tackle the root of the problem. Our aim should be for Ontarians not to need Tarion, because we got it right the first time. Tarion is not cheap for builders and developers

to deal with, and increasing the warranty period fivefold will only lock up more money that should be used for further investments. Maybe we should focus on stronger consumer protection and quality assurance at the source, rather than pouring all of our legislative resources into the corporation tasked with fixing the damage.

A point on condo conversions as well: An expansion of Taron warranties to condo conversions will only discourage the needed new units. Shy of Taron conducting an inch by inch assessment of every brick, nook and cranny of the structure, how can we ask them to warranty a structure that, many times, is decades old?

I look forward to hearing from developers regarding this topic and wonder if they'd still undertake the condo conversions as they do today if these products had to be covered by Taron and they had to incur the associated costs and locked-up fees.

But let's be clear: Our society needs a balanced buyer-beware culture and a focus on quality assurance. Shoddy contractors who won't stand by their work should be driven out of business. Does expanding Taron's mandate accomplish this aim? The question needs answering.

Lastly, licensing for property managers has long been an issue. Considering the enormous funds administered by condo boards and management companies, a seal of approval scheme is in order. But let us not forget the bigger picture: A certification has no guarantee of honesty or good work. What we need are solid laws for transparency and accountability; pieces of paper and embossed stamps can be a means, but they aren't the end.

This bill should be a stimulus for government and the Standing Committee on General Government to re-examine the condo act in its entirety. I hope the member from Trinity-Spadina will push for extensive consultations on the topic so that we avoid a repeat of the aggregate resources review debacle, which with only four short days was conducted in a municipality that doesn't even produce aggregate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I listened with interest to my benchmate. This is a bill, of course, that, in various transmutations, has come back to this House again and again. This time, I think it's actually the strongest version of the bill that he's produced. Let me tell you, it's desperately needed. He talked about this act as not being opened up since 1998. That's a long time and a lot of condos have been built—one million condo owners.

I can tell you, my own husband and I rented a condo a while back and actually really enjoyed it, and thought, "Well, maybe we should become condo owners." We went to a board meeting of owners and after that board meeting, I can tell you, we bought a house. I'll tell you what happened at that board meeting. First, the developer had left the building at that point, and they were looking at a one-third increase in their maintenance fees—up a third. That's significant—hundreds per month. As soon as the developer leaves a building and the warranty period is over—that first halcyon period—that happens.

The other thing I heard at that meeting, which was even more disconcerting than the fact that they were getting whacked with new fees, was that they were talking about some problems in the building. This was a nice building; it wasn't bad, but there were some problems that needed addressing and needed fixing. One of the members said, "Please don't tell anybody outside this room"—they didn't realize we were just renters at that point. "Please don't tell anybody, because we're trying to sell our unit, some of us, and the unit price might go down." The real problem for condo owners is you're really caught in a hard place, because if you complain about your building to the developer or to whomever—complain about your property manager, complain about anything—all of a sudden that has ramifications on your unit price. This puts condo owners in a completely untenable position right now. And Rosie said it best, the member from Trinity-Spadina. If you have to hire a lawyer every time you're going to challenge something, it's unaffordable. It's also unaffordable in the sense that this investment, the most significant investment in your life—buying a home—could conceivably go down if you do. That's very frightening.

I've said many, many times in this place that condo owners have less rights than tenants. I'm telling you that, and the member who's responsible for housing will say, "Wow, that's not good." It's not like tenants have a lot of rights, but condo owners' rights are even worse, because where do they go? Who do they see, other than a lawyer, if they need some help?

Certainly, Taron needs more representation from owners. I've done the tour of Taron. I've talked to the new board chair. It's not that these are bad people, but if you don't structure into the structure of the organization representation from those it supposedly represents, it's not going to do its job well. That's the reality.

Good-faith language, absolutely; licensing property managers—oh my goodness, that's important. I've had owners of condos come to me, talking about this. There's a body that already exists that many property managers are not part of; there's a magazine that goes out. But again, owners and boards don't often know whether their property managers are part of that association or not. They're not licensed, so there's no follow-up. There's no way of holding them to account.

I know the member from Trinity-Spadina needs lots more time to go through a lot in this bill, but the bottom line is, we've got to do something. We have to do something. We have to open up the act. We have to make it stronger. A million condo owners want us to do this. That's what I hear from my condo owners. And if we don't do this, our courts will be tied up with these lawsuits and people will lose, sometimes, their life savings. We can't have that happen to often the most vulnerable. Because who lives in condos, for the most part? The member from Trinity-Spadina was right: some wealthy people, but by and large it's the entry point to all home ownership—young couples—or it's the exit point; it's seniors. Seniors and young couples: They live in condos. We have to help them.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I rise today to speak to Bill 72, Property Owners' Protection Act, 2012. I'd like to begin by applauding the member from Trinity–Spadina for his passion and persistence in introducing this bill. This is the fourth time the member is introducing this bill, so thank you so much for keeping this very important issue alive in this Legislature.

Speaker, this bill addresses a very important issue. To me, quite simply, this bill is about making it easier for condo owners to own their property and to enjoy their property. It's about consumer protection. It's about property rights. So at the outset, I would like to say that I do support the intent of this bill.

The facts are quite simple. The condo act was brought in 14 years ago. The province today is a very different place. It was an appropriate bill for its time; however, times have changed. The number of condominiums in this province has increased dramatically in the intervening time. In 2012, Ontario has become a far more urbanized and more densely populated province.

I can speak to my own riding of Mississauga East–Cooksville. I was shocked to find out that my riding has 23,000 condo units and counting, literally counting, because every time I pass by Highway 10, all I see is more condo construction. Clearly, we do need to overhaul and review the condo act. That is why on April 5, I proposed a private member's resolution urging the Ministry of Consumer Services to look at an alternative dispute resolution mechanism.

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Quite frankly, just this last week I have gone through trying to help two of my constituents who came in with problems with their condo boards. I'm trying to work through with them, but it is a frustrating experience. So I wholeheartedly agree with the member from Trinity–Spadina that something needs to be done, and that is why our government has publicly committed to reviewing this act and has declared it as a priority.

The member from Mississauga–Brampton South quite correctly pointed out that the Minister of Consumer Services has publicly said she will be reviewing this act. That is why, as a first step, our government in 2010 began the task of asking Ontarians for their views on the condo act. The response to our online survey was overwhelming, with 3,000 respondents.

In principle, I agree with what the member opposite is trying to accomplish. However, I do have some concerns with the way the bill is written. Now I would like to say that the purpose of my criticism is not criticism for criticism's sake. I do believe that the reason we debate bills in this House is that the end result is better public policy for all Ontarians, and it is in this spirit that I offer my views. There are a number of issues that I do have, but in the interest of time, I will speak to the top few.

Condo declarations: Bill 72 would repeal the provisions in the condo act that specify the contents of condo declarations. Currently the condo act and regulations list certain minimum requirements for declarations but do

allow builders the flexibility to craft unique declarations suitable to individual condo projects. Bill 72 would remove this flexibility, and I'm not sure that is such a good idea.

Reserve funds: Bill 72 would allow reserve funds to be used for routine repairs and maintenance and to install green technologies. While I do agree that our condos need to be greener, I'm not sure we should be using reserve funds. The way I understand it, it's a bit like taking the money we have set aside for a rainy day to fix the roof and using it to repair the deck.

Review board funding: Bill 72 seeks to create a review board. While I can certainly see the merit of what the member is trying to accomplish through this, what I have a problem with is that the bill does not address how the board would be funded. We can all agree that even the best of ideas are only as good as our ability to pay for them, so I'd like to get a better understanding of how this bill would look at funding this idea.

Bill 72 also looks at extending Taron protection. Again, this is a great, laudable idea, and I would support it, except for the fact that it suffers from the rule of unintended consequences. Extending Taron coverage for condos actually leaves people who have freehold properties at a disadvantage, because it's going to create two sets of property owners: condo owners with extended warranties and people who own single-family homes or whatever—what is not a condo. I really cannot support a proposal that would provide superior coverage to one class of property owners over another.

These are just a few of my criticisms. But I do want to say that I don't want to throw the baby out with the bathwater. I do understand the intent of this bill; I do support the intent of this bill. So what I would like to propose is that the member opposite consider working with this government to craft better legislation, improving upon the work here, because I'm quite certain that whatever we come up with will build on a lot of the work you've done. So your work will continue to be fruitful. I believe this House works best when we all work together. Nobody has a monopoly on good ideas. So I really look forward to working with everybody to review the condo act and come up with a better act.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I'm glad to have a few minutes to respond to the bill put forward by my colleague from Trinity–Spadina. I only have a few moments, so I'd like to address one or two sections of this bill that are of greatest concern to me.

First of all, let me say that I would be among the first to stand up for the rights of homeowners here in Ontario. That's a long-held Conservative principle, and I believe that any legislation with means to that end deserves close attention to ensure it is effective for families. Unfortunately, I think this legislation goes about ensuring these protections in a slightly wrong manner.

Here's what concerns me the most. It's the exception this bill would grant in the purchase of green energy technology by condominium corporations. Simply put, it

would allow those corporations to dip into the condo's common expense funds in order to purchase new green technologies for the building.

Regardless of the condo corporation's intentions, I view this as a violation, actually, of the property owner's right to be informed about how their condo fees are being spent. Currently, any purchases made out of common expense funds must, in fact, be subject to approval. Normally, these would be considered some kind of upgrade to the property. For example, the only exception that exists currently is in the case of emergency repairs to the building.

I don't think any of us would buy a solar panel to fix a leaky roof. Green technology is expensive, and in some cases it's unproven technology. But let's leave the fund to address the real concerns of property owners when it comes to the maintenance of their building. If a new piece of green technology is something that has demonstrable benefit to the community, then the proper consultations will mete that out and the request to purchase with common funds will, in fact, find approval.

I find this to be a slightly shaky amendment that may undermine the rights of condo owners and local management. I believe that this bill requires a more comprehensive review. Having said that, I will support this bill, qualifying the fact that I personally feel that our stakeholders need to have more input. I look forward to further debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Cindy Forster: I'm only going to take a couple of minutes because I want the member from Trinity-Spadina to have time to finish off.

But I want to speak as a condo owner who is experiencing all of the problems that the member has spoken about today. I'm in a condo in my riding. The condo is less than three years old. We have spent tens of thousands of dollars on engineering fees to support our claims for our warranty to both the developer and Tarion. The developer: For the simplest things, like \$10,000 promised in cashback for purchases, people in the condo had to litigate to get that \$10,000 back after closing. Hundreds of shingles have flown off my roof, and when we call the warranty company and the developer, they say, "The roof's not leaking. We can't do anything for you yet."

Those are the kinds of things that happen to condo owners. Our developer was from Calgary. After this project, he skipped town and moved back to Calgary. He's changed his name so you can't even actually follow the developer, because one day they're called one thing, the next month they're in another province and they've called themselves something else.

There are huge problems for condo owners that need to be resolved, and this bill will go a long way to supporting condo owners in this province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: I have just a couple of minutes to make some comments. I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak to Bill 72. Representing a rural riding in

recent years, I haven't had too many condo issues; in fact, I've been elected 11 years and hadn't had any issues. But interestingly enough, two of my constituency meetings last Friday were both to do with problems people were having with condos, one with a relatively new condo, about a nine-year-old condo, where they were all of a sudden faced with \$1.6 million in repairs for roof problems and water damage problems, and challenges with the condo board; and then another very different issue, where—it's not your typical Toronto condo, but semi-detached houses in a subdivision that were a condo. But the condo corporation was defunct, and no fees were being paid so their common areas could be looked after without a corporation.

I think it is important that there be a review. I'm not sure whether this bill is perfect, whether all the solutions that are proposed are the right way to go, but I think a review is important. So I will support it, and hope that it goes to committee and that it gives time for all those involved, obviously the condo owners and the companies involved in building them. I would expect Tarion and others to be there to give comment to make changes that will really make a difference for the industry and for the owners in particular. So I look forward to this bill passing and being referred to committee.

I know we have one other member who would like to speak, so I will end my comments there.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: I first want to acknowledge constituents of mine, Arnold and Gail Kerry, who are here to see their grandson, page Brady, in his actions and functions here today.

On this bill—it's quite strange. It was 1998—actually, I was the parliamentary assistant to the minister at that time and was part of the whole process, a very complex disclosure piece of legislation.

Also, I have a couple of other constituents here, Walter and Mimi Kranzl, who were my constituents but now Charles Sousa's constituents. But I welcome them to Queen's Park.

They did bring a couple of issues to my attention—I'm sure they've mentioned it to Charles as well—that have occurred in the debate today, which is really about three issues. There's the governance issue, which is very important. That's the board that runs it. Some say that suddenly when they become board members, they go into a state of secrecy or something. And there's the whole idea of training and competency in both the managers and members of the board.

But, quite frankly, back in April, I would say that Minister Best did make a commitment in this House on the motion from the member from Mississauga East-Cooksville that she did support a review. So it's important to understand that that motion, at that time, was passed on a voice vote—it was confirmed on April 5—to do a review of the Condominium Act.

This is one time where I want the government to listen to the member from Trinity-Spadina, who's worked on

this four times, and do the right thing. It is a very comprehensive thing. It's a very fast-growing mode of accommodation of people in Toronto and other large cities for affordable housing. I think it's right to have on disclosure legislation the rights and responsibilities.

Another thing I would put on the record: Plain-language contracts would save a lot of lawyers' expenses. I think having plain language in the law is important.

I want to recognize the meetings I had with the Canadian Condominium Institute, as well as others that I've met with on this issue. It's all about disclosure. I do support the idea, and I think a full committee hearing would be appropriate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: What's clear to me is that the Liberal members who have spoken do not support my bill, and the main parts of it are opposed by the two speakers from Mississauga East—Cooksville and Mississauga—Brampton Valley. No? Mississauga—Brampton—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Cooksville—oh, already mentioned.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: South.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: South.

For me, having a review board is a critical part of the change. I know that Conservative members and Liberal members are relying on two organizations from whom you're getting a lot of information, which are CCI and ACMO—because you both made reference to it, and the member from Durham just made reference to it. They don't support a review board. So it is quite possible that you are being influenced by them, and your minister is being influenced by them, but if you do not have a review board, I'm not quite sure what you are left with.

The Tories argue that this would be an additional layer of bureaucracy, but the only bureaucracy we have at the moment, if you'd call it that, is the court system. That is the only thing we've got, and in my mind, that's simply inadequate. It doesn't work. It's not fair. It's simply not right. So to argue that that's an extra layer is to say that condominium owners should have no extra legal rights or recourse to another body where they can present their case cheaply and quickly. That's the argument that the Conservative members are making by saying that the review board would be an extra layer.

The member from Mississauga—Brampton South says that I have not explained how this would be paid for. This is true. I wish I were in government. I would tell you how I would do it. This is why I leave it up to you, because you are the government, and I cannot say that, member from Mississauga—Brampton South, in my bill. I'm not allowed to. Only the minister can say how it would be done and how monies would be spent. So you want to hear from me, but I can't tell you that in the bill.

Mrs. Dipika Damerla: Work together.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: So when you want me to work with you, I'm not quite sure—work with you on what? It's not clear what it is that you want to do. You don't know necessarily, because your minister hasn't told

you—except you've done an online survey, and we don't know what results we got from that survey. Mercifully, that is the only thing your previous minister did. That was the only thing he did, and it was limited in scope—and nothing else. Please share the online results so that I know what people have told you. And if you have an inkling of what your minister wants to do or what you want to do, share it with me. If you don't support my bill and you've got another good bill coming, share that with me too. I'm happy to debate your bill. But, please, it's four years now; we need to move on. We need to change the condo act. What we have doesn't work.

When you ask me how it would be paid for, we can model it after the rental tribunal: \$50 million comes from consolidated revenues and \$10 million comes from fees that people pay. We could model it that way. I have no problem with that, but let's not debate the details of that. You can do that once you get it into your hands. Once we pass it here and you've got it, you can fix that through regulation.

The point about explaining what you want me to add in the building code—what I've been trying to say for years is, I'm not the minister. I've been doing your work for four years. Your minister has lawyers, consultants, policy people. They are the ones who should be out there doing that work. I've been doing that work for you, and you're saying, "Well, maybe there are other things we should add." The Tories are saying, "Maybe there are other things we should add." Indeed, there are. I haven't done a complete review of your Condominium Act, because it's not my job; it is your job to do that.

I have added additional elements in this bill because, as we talk to condominium owners, they press me to add a few more things. I honestly wanted to limit it to my first bill, which was a condo review committee, good-faith language and making sure that we simplify the language and declarations so people could read them. That was a simple bill, and every time I put it out to consultations, people pressure me to add some more. Every time I go to a condo meeting, there's more to add. Indeed, there is, but let's send it out to committee hearings, as the Conservatives are pleading, which I agree with, and then we will hear from condominium owners about the multitude of problems that there are out there, in addition to the ones I have recommended by way of changes.

In my mind, a review board is critical. We need to have a tribunal-like body that is able to solve problems, because at the moment no one is solving anything. Condominium owners are on their own, and it's simply unfair to have them tackle developers on their own. That is critical.

Changing Taronis is critically important. They represent developers. I know it, most of you know it, and condominium owners know it. The structure has to change. If you don't accept that, I'm not quite sure what we're going to do.

The other one is that property managers have to be licensed. That's a critical part of this. If you don't support that, I don't know what else you want to talk about.

If you don't support good-faith language that would force developers to do what they said they would do pre-construction, then I'm not quite sure what you're going to get from me by way of co-operation.

These are the big items. Everything else I've added is important but not as big as these four.

I'm quite happy—

Mr. Mike Colle: Make the developers live in the condos.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Kick them out?

Interjection: Make them live there.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Don't worry. Developers own units that they probably live in as well, and they probably have their children in there or their families, or who knows what else they do with them. They own many units for which, in the first year at least, when the developer controls it, they have proxies that they use, their own 20 proxies if they own 20 units, and they sometimes use them illegally. That's why I say the illegal use of proxies is a critical part and a critical addition of my condominium amendments, because proxies are misused.

1620

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Are you going to vote for our bill?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Your bill? Which one?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Please speak through the Chair.

Interjection: You're wasting time, Rosie.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: We haven't got much time anyway.

I am hoping that we're going to get the Liberals to support me today and that we're going to send it to the legislative committee and that we're going to have hearings and then make amendments, send it here for third reading debate, and finally, the Liberals will proclaim it. That would be really, really nice.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time for private members' public business has expired.

ENDANGERED SPECIES AMENDMENT ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES ESPÈCES EN VOIE DE DISPARITION

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal with ballot item number 37, standing in the name of Ms. Scott.

Ms. Scott has moved second reading of Bill 73.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion, please say "nay."

I believe the nays have it.

We will take the vote at the end of regular business.

TOBY'S ACT (RIGHT TO BE FREE FROM DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT BECAUSE OF GENDER IDENTITY OR GENDER EXPRESSION), 2012

LOI TOBY DE 2012 SUR LE DROIT À L'ABSENCE DE DISCRIMINATION ET DE HARCÈLEMENT FONDÉS SUR L'IDENTITÉ OU L'EXPRESSION SEXUELLES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Ms. DiNovo has moved second reading of Bill 33.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the bill is being referred to—

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm referring it to the social policy committee.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Sorry?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: The social policy committee.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that the bill be referred to social policy. Agreed? Agreed. The bill is so referred.

PROPERTY OWNERS' PROTECTION ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LA PROTECTION DES PROPRIÉTAIRES FONCIERS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Marchese has moved second reading of Bill 72.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the bill is being referred to—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Regs and private bills. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that the bill be referred to regs and private bills. Agreed? The bill is referred to regs and private bills.

ENDANGERED SPECIES AMENDMENT ACT, 2012 LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES ESPÈCES EN VOIE DE DISPARITION

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Call in the members. It will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1624 to 1629.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Ms. Scott has moved second reading of Bill 73.

All those in favour, please rise and remain standing.

Ayes

Armstrong, Teresa J.
 Arnott, Ted
 Barrett, Toby
 Bisson, Gilles
 Campbell, Sarah
 Chudleigh, Ted
 Elliott, Christine
 Fedeli, Victor
 Forster, Cindy
 Gélinas, France

Jackson, Rod
 Klees, Frank
 Leone, Rob
 MacLaren, Jack
 Mantha, Michael
 McKenna, Jane
 Miller, Norm
 Munro, Julia
 Natyshak, Taras
 Nicholls, Rick

O'Toole, John
 Ouellette, Jerry J.
 Scott, Laurie
 Singh, Jagmeet
 Taylor, Monique
 Thompson, Lisa M.
 Vanthof, John
 Walker, Bill
 Wilson, Jim
 Yakubski, John

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing.

Nays

Albanese, Laura
 Berardinetti, Lorenzo
 Bradley, James J.
 Broten, Laurel C.
 Cansfield, Donna H.
 Colle, Mike
 Coteau, Michael
 Dameria, Dipika
 Delaney, Bob
 Dhillon, Vic

Duguid, Brad
 Flynn, Kevin Daniel
 Hoskins, Eric
 Kwinter, Monte
 Leal, Jeff
 MacCharles, Tracy
 Mangat, Amrit
 Milloy, John
 Moridi, Reza
 Murray, Glen R.

Naqvi, Yasir
 Prue, Michael
 Qaadri, Shafiq
 Schein, Jonah
 Sergio, Mario
 Sousa, Charles
 Wong, Soo
 Wynne, Kathleen O.
 Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 30; the nays are 29.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order, please. Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the bill is referred to—

Ms. Laurie Scott: Social policy, please.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The bill is referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy. Agreed? Agreed.

ORDERS OF THE DAY**STRONG ACTION FOR ONTARIO ACT
(BUDGET MEASURES), 2012****LOI DE 2012 SUR UNE ACTION
ÉNERGIQUE POUR L'ONTARIO
(MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)**

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 7, 2012, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 55, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various Acts / Projet de loi 55, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter et à modifier diverses lois.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a distinct pleasure to rise this afternoon to continue the debate on Bill 55.

Bill 55 is quite an interesting bill. It's 327 pages. It's 69 different schedules, and it amends over 50 pieces of legislation. We would call this an "omnibus bill." In fact, members would be surprised to know, even though they're not listening, that section 19 deals with one of the pieces of legislation that we just voted on: the Endangered Species Act. If members on the government side had actually read this bill, they would know that schedule 19 included many of the provisions that Ms. Scott had called for and we will be discussing in hearings. This actually improves the Endangered Species Act by considering the state of agriculture, forestry, as well as the environment itself. There's always a balance in these things.

But what is most discouraging—if you follow the debate on the budget and our leader, Tim Hudak, you will know that one of the important things is, we were looking for two strategies to be addressed. One was jobs for our youth and the economy, and the second one was the size and cost of government. Those are the two focal points that we were missing.

We've had difficulty getting the attention of the government, and in that respect the attention of the government has a context. We have, for three weeks now, been raging on behalf of people in Ontario. Just yesterday, our member from Oak Ridges-Markham, Frank Klees, brought to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care's attention a death that, in some respects, certainly involved the Ornge helicopter: the lack of a team to evacuate accident victims. The victim died as a result of not being transported responsibly to the hospital. That's evidence that the Minister of Health has refused to acknowledge that the Ornge helicopter organization—the medical evacuation—is a shameful, scandalous waste of public money and, more seriously, a waste of public health money, when we know there isn't enough assistance for seniors living in their communities, there's not enough access to some of the treatments that are required—even the former Minister of Energy, who screwed that file up.

In the context of this, a couple of things: Don Drummond issued a report, and the report he issued was a scathing indictment of the policies of Premier McGuinty. That's really what it was. In fact, the titles of most of the articles I have right here at my desk, as soon as I find them—these are titles that I think are worth repeating.

This is a title from one of the papers; I'm not making this up. This is third party commentary, and it says, "Fiscal Concerns for Education: The Sun Was Warning about Concerns Raised in the Drummond Report Starting Eight Years Ago." It's about the scandalous rate of spending and the increased rate of spending that was not sustainable.

Another issue with respect to suggested changes by Don Drummond: "Suggested Spending Cuts Widespread."

This is another. I think this is the Globe and Mail. It's a very worthwhile read as well. It says Ontario's cash-strapped government now has a world of options. This is

a whole double page that I think members on the other side should read.

Interjection: What date was it?

Mr. John O'Toole: The date of that piece in the *Globe and Mail*—look it up—is February 16.

This is another very important title—these are all third party comments. This is “Dalton’s Mythical Green Jobs,” and goes on to say, “If You Believe Ontario’s Premier Is Creating 50,000 Green Jobs, You’ll Believe Anything.”

There’s another headline: “Ontario Given Stark Road Map,” and the Minister of Finance is there trying to explain his way out of that one.

This is another article: “The Fiscal Follies of Duncan and Dalton.”

This is quite an honest one. It’s a worthy read as well. This is from February as well. It’s from the *Globe and Mail*. It says we can’t save Ontario, “Only Reform Will.” This is quite an informative article.

The point I’m making is that they are the government at the moment. It’s a minority, as we all know. They’re governing as if they have lots of money. It reminds me of Joe Clark years ago when he thought he’d try to get through with it.

Here’s the issue, though: One more serious thing is that we’ve been calling for a select committee—in fact, I would say a public inquiry—which was voted on in this Legislature, and in that select committee, the minister himself voted for this. The vote, I believe, was 54 to 53. The vote carried that we would have a select committee. What have they done? Nothing.

Now, understand why we ring the bells. I want the people of Ontario to know that we think wasting public money, especially health care dollars, is scandalous. And so on that matter, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Durham has moved adjournment of the debate. Agreed? I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say “aye.”

All those opposed, please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the nays have it. Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1639 to 1709.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Durham has moved adjournment of the debate.

All in favour, please stand and remain standing.

All those opposed, please stand and remain standing.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 13; the nays are 24.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I declare the motion lost.

The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I’m somewhat disappointed that the government side doesn’t realize just how important the issue—that I caused the ringing of the bells for a specific reason. The reason was trying to get the government to have a select committee—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: Quite genuinely, Mr. Speaker, through you—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Can I ask the member to speak to the bill that’s in front of us.

Mr. John O'Toole: All right. It’s always part of the motive for the procedural wrangling, but if you want to be that specific, I have another document here.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: No props.

Mr. John O'Toole: This is not a prop. See, they’re now calling the auditor’s report a prop. Can I not refer to the auditor’s report? This is a report issued June 28—I won’t hold the prop up, then.

Hon. James J. Bradley: This is a prop.

Mr. John O'Toole: That is a bad prop, though.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Would the Minister of the Environment please come to order.

Mr. John O'Toole: What I am trying to get to—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Peterborough, come to order, please.

Mr. John O'Toole: Speaker, I’m trying to be—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: This is the bill. This is what we’re debating, and I find there are very few people interested in what I have to say. I’ve tried to—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Peterborough, please come to order.

Mr. John O'Toole: I know the Minister of Economic Development spoke on this on May 1. I know he did. Now, he is the minister, and what he should do is take some responsibility for the state of disrepair of our energy system, because he was the former Minister of Energy, and one of the most expensive abuses right now is the whole energy file that I see is causing us great grief. I’ve got to find out exactly what it is here. The one thing—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask the member, no electronic devices.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, no. There are no electronic notes here, that’s for sure.

I would say that the one thing in the energy file that you should know about is the global adjustment. Our critic, Vic Fedeli, has talked on this relentlessly. What he’s trying to educate the people about is that the economy is so dependent on having safe, reliable, affordable energy. We have safe—because nuclear is in my riding. Reliable—it’s nuclear, and it’s in my riding. Affordable? We haven’t got any.

Affordable energy is a thing of the past, and I worry most about seniors. I worry because they’re terrified to open up their electricity bills, and I know that they’re now going to put a charge on there for the smart meters. You’re going to be paying a monthly rental fee for the smart meter.

Your energy at home is going up by 43%. That’s what auditors have told us, and that’s what you can expect out of the current part of the—now, here’s another. This document that I referred to earlier, which is what I want

to read from for Hansard, is called the Auditor General's Review of the 2011 Pre-Election Report on Ontario's Finances, so this is prior to the election. The Auditor General wrote this report, and I'm reading it. Here's what he said. He said that your forecasts were aggressive and optimistic—

Mr. Ted Arnott: And needed to be taken with a big grain of salt.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yeah, and they needed to be taken with a grain of salt.

Now, here's what they said: The growth between 2003 and 2011 in health care was, on average, over the past eight years, 7.1%. What are they changing it to? To 1.5%, and some additional money for long-term care or home care. Education: Over the last eight years, it was 4.8%. What are they moving that to? To 1%. Post-secondary education: They've been spending 8.6%, and they're moving it down to 1%. Children's services: They've been spending 6.7%, and they're moving it down, I think, to 0%. Now, the average spending—we won't cover them all—from 2003-11 has increased by 6.9% per year for eight-plus years. It's moving down to 1.2%, 1.5%.

Tim Hudak has put something on the table here. One thing he put on the table—and the Premier, in his speech to the economic club this week, I think it was, said, "I agree with Tim." Basically, that's what he said, if you read the paper. We've put on a public sector wage freeze. That's what we put on.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: You'll have your time; you can refute what I say. But here's the truth: We've said a public sector wage freeze will save you \$2 billion a year.

Premier McGuinty, I believe, is starting to listen to Tim. I really believe that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): If you'd please refrain from using names.

Mr. John O'Toole: Procedurally—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Can I ask the members on the government side to please come to order.

I would remind the member who is speaking not to refer to people's names. Carry on.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I sometimes get so emotionally engaged in my speeches that I should stick my notes more often.

I want to put a few things on before I actually move forward with another motion of sorts. The 2012 budget: Here's the problem, and Don Drummond told you this—I have to use some names. The 2012 budget anticipates a provincial deficit for 2011-12 of \$15 billion. Mr. Drummond said that if they don't make changes before 2017, it's going to be \$30 billion.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Good luck. You've made a lot of promises; you've never kept any of them.

Here's the other one: a provincial deficit of \$15.2 billion. If you look at this, what I'm saying is, you relate the

cost—the cost of servicing your accumulated debt right now is about \$10.5 billion. If they don't make changes and you double it, then the cost of servicing the debt at today's interest is going to be \$20 billion. The third-largest expenditure in the provincial budget of \$120-some billion is the cost of servicing debt. All you need to do there, Minister Duguid, is basically look at Italy, look at Greece, look at Ireland, look at Portugal and look at Spain. The writing is on the wall. You've got to stop spending more than you're earning. You can't spend more than you earn for long.

Right now you've got a deficit, and the deficit is forecast to continue. The debt interest is going to go up. Our trading partners are in trouble: Europe is in some trouble, as well as the United States. These are difficult times, so it makes for difficult medicine.

I can only say that we still want—through you, of course, Mr. Speaker—the respect of the people's money, the public taxpayers' money, especially in health care, with the aging population. There's not sufficient enough attention being paid to long-term care or aging in the community. All I can say is this: One area that I know they could save hundreds of millions of dollars in, perhaps \$1 billion, would be the efficient organization of ambulance services in Ontario. We want a select committee. We have been asking for it for weeks now. This blockade—some people watching, they've got to understand that these procedural things are to ask Premier McGuinty, respectfully, to fulfil his commitment and have a select committee.

What could be wrong with that? What have they got to hide? Do you understand? Come clean; "Leave the keys on the desk" sort of thing. We believe that that would solve a lot of the problems.

With that, I think it's time—they seem to be unwilling to listen, unless some of them stand and say that you will have a select committee. We'd be more than happy. But with that not being the case, I'm going to move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Durham has moved adjournment of the House. Agreed? I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

I believe the ayes have it.

Please call in the members. It will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1720 to 1750.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. O'Toole has moved adjournment of the House.

All in favour, please stand and remain standing.

All those opposed, please stand and remain standing.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 9; the nays are 20.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The motion is lost.

Mr. O'Toole, you have the floor.

Mr. John O'Toole: It appears that the other side is not prepared to have a select committee deal with the outlandish spending in the billion-dollar boondoggle.

But I want to put a couple more things on the record in the limited time I have left. I'm looking at all this independent commentary on the state of the economy, and this particular one is A Transformative Agenda, by Allan O'Dette, who's the head of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. What does he say as an alert? Now, these are independent business people that are telling you that you're on the wrong road.

One of the things he says here: "The Challenges: 38% of business and civic leaders feel the province is either not that innovative or not innovative at all." Over 30% of the business leaders in the chamber of commerce membership believe that you're either not innovative at all or not very much.

They go on to say that we lag behind in infrastructure investment for the IT economy. We are 12% behind our competition in investment in infrastructure. That's the technology economy. We all know it's an innovation economy that's required. We know that.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, the former member—now, I have another report and he's maybe not interested in this. This is Roger Martin—the task force on competitiveness and productivity at the Rotman school of business. It's highly regarded, often cited, and referred to as an independent expert. What does he say here in the first couple of pages? He goes on to say that we have to be a leader and all the rest of it. But what he said was, "Between 2002 and 2009, Ontario's manufacturers shed 300,000 jobs." This is a quote, Mr. Speaker. "While the hemorrhaging has stopped, there is no evidence that these jobs will" ever return. This is Roger Martin. This isn't Tim Hudak or Andrea Horwath. Premier McGuinty—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I remind the member again to refrain from using people's names.

Mr. John O'Toole: Oh, well, the leader of the NDP. Pardon me. I should pay more attention.

I guess the key is—look, this isn't me criticizing you. I'd like to work together, but you're unwilling to work with us. If I had time left, I would actually ask for another motion, but we'll just get on here.

This is from the Canadian Council of Chief Executives. What are they saying? "I am proposing a war on the provincial debt..."

The member from Wellington—Halton Hills moved a motion that we have a mandatory commitment to balanced budget financing.

Interjection: And they voted it down.

Mr. John O'Toole: And they voted it down two weeks ago. There's no willingness—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, they're interrupting.

Here's the issue: To go through a recovery plan, you have to admit you have a problem. I recommend that Dwight Duncan—the Minister of Finance—should say, "My name's Dwight Duncan and I have a spending problem." Then we can get to the recovery part of it.

So, really, with all due respect, if there was time left, I would move that we need—I could talk to the House leader. We need to have a select committee. All of this would be over. We would be working together harmoniously for the people of Ontario. Come on. Do the right—we can be better. We can do better.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands adjourned until Monday, May 13, at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1755.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Granum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
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Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
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Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre de Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development and Innovation / Ministre du Développement économique et de l'Innovation
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Deputy Premier / Vice-premier ministre Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby-Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Attorney General / Procureur général
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Milligan, Rob E. (PC)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Orazietti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Piruzza, Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	
Vacant	Kitchener–Waterloo	

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak
Grant Crack, Kim Craiton
Vic Dhillon, Michael Harris
Rob Leone, Taras Natyshak
Rick Nicholls, Michael Prue
Mario Sergio
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

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Cindy Forster, Monte McNaughton
Yasir Naqvi, Teresa Piruzza
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permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: David Zimmer
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Joe Dickson, Rosario Marchese
David Orazietti, Laurie Scott
Todd Smith, Jeff Yurek
David Zimmer
Clerks / Greffiers: Tamara Pomanski (pro. tem), Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Phil McNeely
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Bill Mauro, Jim McDonell
Phil McNeely, Randy Pettapiece
Peter Tabuns, Monique Taylor
Lisa M. Thompson
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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Shafiq Qadri
Laura Albanese, Teresa J. Armstrong
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Mike Colle
Frank Klees, Jack MacLaren
Paul Miller, Rob E. Milligan
Shafiq Qadri
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

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permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
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Gilles Bisson, Donna H. Cansfield
Steve Clark, Garfield Dunlop
Jeff Leal, Lisa MacLeod
Jonah Schein
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Toby Barrett
Toby Barrett, France Gélinas
Phil McNeely, Norm Miller
Reza Moridi, Jerry J. Ouellette
Liz Sandals, Jagmeet Singh
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: John Vanthof
Michael Coteau, Grant Crack
Vic Dhillon, Randy Hillier
Rod Jackson, Mario Sergio
Peter Tabuns, John Vanthof
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ted Chudleigh
Ted Chudleigh, Dipika Damerla
Cheri DiNovo, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Ernie Hardeman, Tracy MacCharles
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Jane McKenna
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